

INFANCY AND MANHOOD
OF
CHRISTIAN LIFE.



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INFANCY AND MANHOOD

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CHRISTIAN LIFE.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"SEVEN YEARS' STREET PREACHING IN SAN FRANCISCO,"

"RECONCILIATION: OR, HOW TO BE SAVED,"

"THE MODEL PREACHER," "CALIFORNIA LIFE ILLUSTRATED," ETC.



"—— Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."—ST. PAUL.

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P R E F A C E.



THESE pages are kindly addressed to the enlightened reason and consciences of Christians, regardless of name or nation, but may be read with interest by any intelligent sinner.

Many such wish to know, and have a right to inquire, whether or not, the many dwarfish Christians, within the lines of their acquaintance, are fair specimens of the workmanship of Jesus, in his great work of saving the world.

THE AUTHOR.

LONDON, *March 12th*, 1867.

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INFANCY AND MANHOOD

OF

CHRISTIAN LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

BABES AND DWARFS.

“WHEN for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe.” What a glorious event in the history of any soul, to be born again, to become a babe in Christ, an event that we will celebrate in eternity; but to remain a babe is to become a dwarf, and fail to attain the end for which we were born.

The persons defined by St. Paul in the fore-

going extract from his letter to the Hebrews appear to have been of this class.

He represents them as babes, not new born babes, old babes they were, old enough to be men and teachers, but their experience and Christian bearing were characterized by infantile imbecility. Having, in my recent book, entitled *Reconciliation, or How to be Saved*, entered so largely into the subject of the reconciliation of the penitent sinner to God, and his adoption into the family of God, we will occupy no time with that subject here. Allow me briefly to call your attention to a few characteristics of a spiritual dwarf, and then we will pass on to define more at length some of the leading characteristics of that higher development of spiritual life constituting "a perfect man," filling "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

One characteristic of these dwarfish, sickly souls, who it appears were quite numerous in St. Paul's time, and are to be found now in every christian community, was that they were "dull of hearing"—their spiritual perceptions were very obtuse.

Another characteristic was that they were "unskilful in the word of righteousness," no doubt both in its application to themselves and to others.

To find out the nature of a disease by the definition of the symptoms in a medical work, the right kind and quantity of medicine suited to each case, and the apothecary's adjustment of it, and its administration to the patient, requires skill; and certainly no less skill for the cure of the soul than the body. In the use of the Spirit's sword, too, many unskilful hands seize the blade instead of the handle, and do but little execution, except upon themselves to their own wounding.

Another characteristic mentioned by St. Paul, applied to some of his Corinthian converts, was a very unhealthy measure of carnality in their experience. "And I, brethren," says he, "could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." They really were babes in Christ, hence not indulging in wilful sin, but through a neglect to leave the principles, and go on to perfection, they had become sickly, and the carnal forces had so gotten the ascendancy of their spiritual vitality as greatly to endanger their right relation to God, and hence to impair their usefulness in the church. It manifested itself in party "strife,

envyings, and divisions." One party was "for Paul," another "for Apollos," another "for Cephas," and in proportion as their party zeal for men increased, their spiritual zeal for Christ decreased.

Another characteristic mentioned by St. Paul in his epistle to the church in Ephesus, was instability. "Children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Without stopping to amplify, or to illustrate these, allow me to say that such a state is very unsatisfactory to the subject of it, to God, to his Church, and to the unbelievers, who have a right to expect better things of those who have put themselves under the treatment of the great physician. It is very unsatisfactory to abide in the principles of anything. Every great system has its axiomatic, or fundamental principles. These are essential, but to learn them simply, and stop there, is to fail of the end for which they were designed.

For example, you send your boy to school, and after a school experience of three weeks John comes home with a long face. You would suppose from his appearance that he had been flogged.

"John, what's the matter?"

“I don’t want to go to school any more.”

“Why do you not want to go to school?”

“Because I don’t.”

“That is no reason. Tell us why you don’t want to go to school?”

“Because my teacher keeps me in the A B C’s all the time. I learned them all in three days, and I have been going over them every day for three weeks, and I’m sick of it.” Of course he is, and no wonder. He is abiding in the principles, and that does not meet the aspiring demands of his young mind. He must leave the principles and go on to the attainment of the great ends of an education. How must he leave the principles? Abandon them, and seek some new thing? Nay, he leaves the principles by developing and applying them to their great practical ends. He combines letters into syllables, syllables into words, sentences, discourses, and all the ends embraced in the one grand design to which they are essential as elementary principles.

The apostle employs the figure of a master-builder leaving the foundation of his building. How does he proceed? Does he lay a good foundation, and then abandon it, and go off and commence to build in another place? Nay, he

lays his foundation, and then leaves it by raising up his walls, closing in his superstructure, and thus attains the end for which he laid the foundation. If you select a site for a church, lay your foundation, and build up your walls to the base of the lower windows, and stop there, what will it avail you? Passers-by would say, “They commenced to build but were not able to finish,” and call it your “folly.” Thus many spiritually lay their foundation, and work well for a season, and then stop. Their half-built walls exposed to the wear and waste of the elements rapidly deteriorate, and are soon overgrown with creepers and weeds, and become the receptacle of lizards, snakes, and all manner of things unclean. Hence, at the next great awakening, such persons are found trying to clear away the rubbish of their decayed ruins, “to lay again the foundation of repentance from dead works.” Some are engaged in that miserable business every year. One laying of the foundation should suffice. Lay it deep and solid on the foundation stone revealed in the gospel, rear up your walls, close in the superstructure of a holy heart, and life, and go on furnishing, and embellishing to the day of your death and for ever. But if you, through neglect, have allowed your walls to

fall into decay, then the very best thing for you to do is to "lay again the foundation of repentance;" don't try to patch up an old dead experience. If you have backslidden in heart or life, don't try to slip back into the kingdom under a profession of seeking holiness. Honestly "confess and forsake" your sins and heart alienation from God, and when you obtain pardon and the clear witness of it, then "go on to perfection."

It is not optional with a believer to "go on to perfection" or not. It is his imperative duty, just as fast as the Holy Spirit gives him light, and applies the command to his conscience. When a soul is regenerated and born into the kingdom of Jesus, it is filled with unspeakable joy, because of its deliverance from the power of darkness, its heirship to eternal life, its blessed fellowship with the spirit of adoption, and because it is now in harmony with God's gracious arrangement for its salvation. After the soul is somewhat established in the grace of pardon wherein it stands, then the Holy Sanctifier sheds increasing light into the heart of the young believer, and reveals its inherent depravity to an alarming degree. This is an occasion of great temptation. The enemy takes advantage of the situation, and tries hard to

involve the soul in doubt as to its justified relation, and hence to cast away its confidence. But if the believer steadily maintain the fact of his submission to the will of God, cling to Jesus, and walk after the Spirit, he will find the Gospel supply exactly suited to the demands of his case, and the trial of his faith will only prompt him to go on, to perfection. But if he hearken to the tempter, and cast away his confidence, he will be entangled and overcome. Or if he simply neglect to go on he gets out of harmony with God's gracious arrangement, and hence unhappy; then to supply the lack, he begins to deal a little in forbidden worldly pleasures, and you will soon hear him tell of his “ups and downs,” and cry, “O my leanness, my leanness!” Many such hang back among the stragglers that follow the sacramental host “afar off.” Some such supply their lack of piety with polemic zeal for their creed, or church organization; some by their financial ability, as trustees or stewards; and some by their liberal contributions, and thus get a prominent position in the Church; but they are seldom found in the prayer meeting, and if not spiritually dead, are at least but spiritual dwarfs. They should be esteemed for their good financial and ecclesiastical works, but if to their

varied and valuable talents for organization, government and finance, they had heart purity in proportion, what a blessing it would be to themselves, and to the world. But no matter what a man's social or official position in the Church may be, he must "leave the principles and go on to perfection," or jeopardize his soul.

What, do you mean to say that a justified soul is in danger of being lost? Nay, justification by faith secures to us a title to heaven, holiness, the fitness for it, but the justified soul is in the immediate care of the Holy Sanctifier, who holds the keys of the gates of death, and will perfect his work before he opens the gates; but the men or women who dare to ignore a positive command of God, and neglect a palpable duty, will thereby disjoint their justified relation, grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and fall into the snare of Satan.

"But are there not multitudes of good Christians who do not go on to perfection?"

There are multitudes who bear the name of Christ who do not go on to perfection; but I should not consider them good Christians by any means. Some of them are entirely destitute of vital godliness, as their lives show. Many are dwarfs, not wilful sinners, for one wilful sin would

cause their ejection from the kingdom : but they are “dull of hearing,” sickly and feeble, and are really objects to be pitied by the Lord, and by all good men. Others, theoretically, know the way very well, but spend their time in sinning and repenting—a most dissipating and dangerous business.

“How can we reconcile the conduct of such as know their duty, and do it not, with God’s immutable principles of righteousness?”

There is no possibility of such reconciliation except by repentance and renewed acts of saving faith in Christ.

“How is it that God bears so patiently with such?”

“He is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” He bears with such on the same principle that he “endured with much long-suffering” such “vessels of wrath” as Pharaoh, and all other sinners who persist in resisting the Holy Ghost till they destroy their spiritual receptivity and become obnoxious to avenging justice. In proportion to our light, so is our responsibility, and in proportion to our neglect, or resistance of light, so is the waste and destruction of our

spiritual susceptibilities. Our only safety is to obey God, walk after his Spirit, and "go on to perfection," for while dwarfish delinquents may repent and obtain forgiveness, as any other class of sinners may, nevertheless, the neglect to obey God's positive command, "Be ye holy," involves a risk of forfeiture, and soul destruction that no person should take; but this is not merely a question involving the personal salvation of professing Christians, but one on which hangs, conditionally, the salvation of the world.

Whatever may be the organic strength of the Church, the number and grandeur of her institutions and appliances, her real spiritual effectiveness in the prosecution of her great mission of preaching "the Gospel to every creature, and of disciplining all nations," will be proportionate to the holiness of her individual members. A Church composed mainly of spiritual dwarfs, instead of "perfect men," must be a dwarfish, ineffective church.

The Christian Church was planted in England, if not during the life time of some of the apostles, certainly not long after their decease. She has for hundreds of years enjoyed the protection of British law, great liberty of action, and the command of ample resources. Her material progress in the

construction of houses of worship, educational and humane institutions, Bible, tract, and missionary societies, has certainly, especially within the last hundred years, been very great: but when we remember that God's "purpose" and provision of salvation in Christ embraces every sinner on the globe, and that God the Holy Ghost hath been sent down to "abide with us," and administer this provision to the salvation of the whole human family, we see at once the appalling fact that there is a dreadful miscarriage somewhere.

Why is it that we grapple so feebly, and ineffectively with Mohammedism, and the various forms of Heathenism? Why is it, that even in Christian countries, comparatively so few even profess to be loyal to God, their Divine Sovereign? Why is it that the large majority of our children, brought up at our family altars, and trained in the nursery of our churches—the Sunday School—go out into the world unblushing rebels against God? Why is it, that the Christian Church, instead of pushing a bold aggressive warfare, under the leadership of her Divine Teacher, the Holy Spirit, for the conquest of the world, is in the main quietly reposing in her trenches, barracks, and spiritual hospitals, maintaining a feeble defensive,

unable to resist the innovating forces of worldliness and sin, and the corrupting tide of infidelity itself?

I am no croaker. I fully and thankfully appreciate the grand appliances of the visible Church of Christ, regardless of name, her doctrines, her ordinances, her functional orders, and the great work God hath wrought, and is doing through the instrumentality of his Church, still we can't ignore the sad facts before stated, which go to prove her pitiable ineffectiveness. In searching for the grounds of this dreadful deficiency, involving the loss of millions of souls, we will not find them so much, as before intimated, in her organization, ordinances, and institutions, as in a want of entire heart purity in her individual members, and a right adjustment, and employment of her agencies.

The dreadful effect of this dwarfish state of the church, spiritually, running through successive ages, has been to establish teaching precedents, and practical traditions of men, which appropriate Gospel terms and teachings in a low accommodated sense, suited to her dwarfish dimensions, and hence, though clothed in the drapery of Bible truth, do, nevertheless, to an alarming extent, "make void the doctrines of God."

Thus we have a sickly, dwarfish type of Christianity, which is proving itself to a demonstration quite inadequate to meet the demands of her great mission of mercy in saving the whole world.

Now, what is to be done? we don't want any new inventions. We want to get rid of the human inventions which have been obtruded into God's great work of salvation, and get back to the doctrines, principles, precedents, and methods so clearly delineated in God's plain book of instructions, and get up especially to the high type of Christian life which was exemplified by the apostles and martyrs.

This low type does not take hold of the active potent elements of man's nature, nor open a field for their exercise; hence, the most active forces of our being flow out into other channels of human enterprise—all kinds of adventure, commerce, politics and war; hence we give to God and his great enterprise of saving the world a secondary position, to be attended to as a sort of necessity, and hence, in a formal ineffective manner.

We have thousands of dwarfish Christians who are sharp enough during six days in the week in their various departments of business. The best

powers of their minds are at it, with a will. They employ the most common sense, direct, effective methods for the attainment of their ends, but when Sunday comes, and the work of God and souls claims their special attention, they seem to lock up their brains, and carefully hide the key till Monday morning, and go through the Sabbath routine of services, employing methods for God which, for ineffectiveness, they could not afford to employ in their secular business. We often hear them appropriately singing :

“ In vain we tune our formal songs,
In vain we strive to rise,
Hosanna’s languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies.”

What a pity !

The apostolic type of the religion of Jesus, not ascetic, sombre, cold, selfish, stiff, formal and forbidding, but genial and lovely as the rising light of the morning, is perfectly adapted to every legitimate relation of life, every duty of life, every appropriate enjoyment of life. It is adapted to the whole man, to the most aspiring active elements of his mind and heart. It sanctifies the whole of them to God and his purposes, and opens for

their exercise the most appropriate and ample field. Take for example, the heroic element of human nature.

Will the formal services of our churches, and the spirit and methods we offer to God, for the accomplishment of his great undertaking of saving our fallen race wake up and enlist the heroic fire of the human soul?

See how the tocsin of war wakes up this element in the souls of men.

Probably a million of men, within the last five years, in prompt response to its calls, have marched down through the gates of death. We turn away from fields of blood and slaughter, and say, "Noble fellows! Heroes they were! They died gloriously in their country's cause!"

This heroic element of our nature, when sanctified, and employed appropriately for God, is essentially the old martyr spirit of the apostolic times. It is a thing of the heart. Is any call so worthy of a response from this department of our being as the call of the Holy Spirit which would develop our perfect loyalty to God, and harmoniously ally us with all his loyal subjects in earth and heaven. Is any enterprise so worthy of the intelligent and full employment of the heroic power of

our nature as the work of saving souls from death? The glorious cause in which Jesus laid down his life ! The cause in which the martyrs bled, and died !

There is scarcely a false system of religion or of heathenish superstition in the world that does not enlist this mighty element of our nature.

The dwarfish type of Christianity is afraid to enlist it lest something dreadful might happen. They might run off the track, or go too fast, and they could not keep up to "steady the ark." As the Holy Ghost is the principle, and as we are but his humble servants, had we not better give the management of the train into his hands, and obey his orders. The heroic element of our nature, corrupted and misapplied, is a formidable and dangerous power, but why should we therefore fear to press it into the service of Christ, where it legitimately belongs. Thus we should be able to battle successfully with the same force abused and misapplied in the various systems of Heathenism, and Mohammedism, which we must conquer before the world can be saved. Sanctified by the Spirit, it employs no weapons but such as are "spiritual, and mighty through God, in pulling down the strongholds of Satan;" but it will secure perfect heart loyalty to God to the death.

Now, my dear reader, as we will again have occasion to advert, in some incidental illustrations, to this part of our subject, we will proceed to define some of the leading characteristics of that higher Christian life called “perfection.”

CHAPTER II.

GOING ON TO PERFECTION.

“STRONG meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.” Allow me to call your attention at the outset to this important fact, the term perfection, and terms with various slight shades of meaning, representing different phases of the same gracious attainment, which are generally used synonymously—such as “holiness,” “sanctify you wholly,” and “perfect love,” are not terms of Methodist invention, nor as it regards their spiritual relations and meaning, of human origin at all. They are all terms employed by God, the Holy Ghost, in application to the experience of believers in this life. It is fair to presume that he perfectly understood the use

of language, and that in the employment of such terms he meant something. He certainly would not use such words all through the Old and New Testament Scriptures, unless he designed them to represent some definite, understandable, attainable thing. To suppose that he would use these terms as mere verbiage, and yet make them the subject of specific command and promise, is monstrous blasphemy. If we must admit that the Holy Spirit did understand the use of these terms, and did design by them to teach a definite attainable development of Christian life called "perfection," to which he promises to lead us, if we will cheerfully walk after him, why should any man dare to ignore God's teaching, and say, "O it is impossible! impossible! No man ever was perfect, or can be in this life!"

The least we can do in safety, my dear friend, is to admit that in the use of the term "perfection," in application to the experience of men and women in this life, the Holy Spirit meant something, and something, too, of vast practical importance to ourselves, and hence we should patiently and prayerfully investigate the subject, and ascertain what he did mean, and how we may attain it.

The meaning of words or terms in reference to

any particular subject is to be found in their subjective relations. The lines defining the subject fix a limit to the meaning of words connected with it, and hence preclude an arbitrary or general meaning of the same terms, which is manifestly foreign to the subject in hand. Apply this common sense rule to the term perfection, in its relation to human experience in this world, and you will see that St. Paul does not mean absolute perfection in any sense, for that belongs to God alone, and He is not the subject of discourse at all.

He does not mean the perfection of angels, whatever that may be, for he is not writing about angels.

He does not mean the pristine perfection of our first parents in Eden, whatever that may have been, for he is not talking about them, but about their unhappy children, who are, through the redemption of Jesus, recovering from the effects of their fall.

He does not mean a perfection that will in this life exempt us from infirmities of mind—unavoidable errors of judgment—nor, hence, errors of practice; nor the bodily infirmities to which flesh in common is heir. The Saviour distinctly advertised his followers of the fact that he was not

ye shall have tribulation." And St. Paul, in showing the saving benefits of the Gospel to the souls and to the bodies of believers, assures us that while the soul is saved here from all sin, the body remains under the original curse—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"—and hence subject to the legitimate ills of that curse; and that, though the redemption of the body is as much a matter of immutable provision as the redemption of the soul, it does not take effect till "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God," and then "the dead in Christ shall rise first." Hence St. Paul comforts the suffering saints of his time by saying, though "Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life"—restored to life—"because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." The same Holy Spirit that awakened us, sealed our pardon, and purifies our souls by faith, shall quicken our dead bodies at the appointed time. "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until

now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." These things argue no defect of the gospel provision, and are not inconsistent with purity of heart or life, but are all embraced in God's perfect disciplinary plans for the trial of our faith, and the development of the inner life, and the fruits of holiness.

Again, I remark, it is not a perfection which will exempt us from temptation. We may expect to be exposed to temptation while we live, not as an accidental calamity, but part of a disciplinary purpose. "Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Hence, "we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." It is no sin to be tempted, and hence not inconsistent with perfection. The sin is in yielding to temptation, and there is no necessity for that. Satan means it all for evil, but God permits it all for our good. Competition with the powerful intellect of Satan gives us mental development, and a development of meekness, patience,

humility, faith, and hope through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. To be able to say with St. Paul, "We are not ignorant of his devices," and resist him at all times, we must have "our senses exercised to discern good and evil." For example, we must learn to discriminate clearly between temptation and sin. Until I had my spiritual senses exercised "to discern good and evil," I was greatly troubled on this subject. The very night I obtained the pardon of my sins through the great mercy of God in Christ, which was the 28th of August, 1841, the enemy soon after came in "upon me like a flood," injecting into my mind all sorts of bad thoughts—vulgar and profane thoughts which I detested—and then plausibly insinuated "that it was a pretty piece of presumption in me to claim to be a child of God with such a heart full of wickedness." I could not then understand it, and writhed under the "fiery darts" of Satan; but I knew that I had surrendered my helpless soul to God; that I did accept Jesus as my Saviour, and that I had received the love of God in my heart, and that I did "love God," and "did love the brethren," and was enabled steadily to cling to Jesus, and was kept from "entering into temptation." As I grew in grace and in knowledge, I learned that it

was a part of christian warfare to encounter these devices of Satan, and that by the direct action of spirit upon spirit he can convey an impression to the mind as distinctly as we can through the physical senses. We hear and see many wicked things in the streets daily, but they are not sin to us unless we enter into sympathy with them. Jesus had a clear perception of each temptation Satan put to him, or it would not have been a temptation. So the vilest temptation that could be conceived in the polluted heart of Satan cannot in the slightest degree contaminate our hearts unless we enter into sympathy with it.

We must have our "senses exercised," too, to discriminate clearly between "the remains of the carnal mind," to be eradicated by the Holy Sanctifier, and the essential instincts, appetites, and passions of our nature. Many sincere Christians become sadly involved in this matter. They want "the roots of bitterness" all to be extracted, and entirely removed, but they have a most vague indefinite idea of what those roots of bitterness consist of, and Satan leads them to think that they will experience some wonderful transformation, destroying, or entirely changing some of their natural instincts, appetites and passions. It is certainly

not God's design, while we remain in the body, to destroy any essential instinct, appetite or passion, but to purge them of everything incongruous with the spirit of holiness, bring them back from their eccentric wanderings to their true orbit, sanctify them to their legitimate purposes, and have us restrain, regulate, or exercise them properly in all their appropriate relations. Hence the necessity of constant watchfulness and prayer to "keep our body under," and not allow any of these to be drawn out of harmony with God's designs.

I may remark here, that the appropriate sphere of this perfection is the region of our moral nature, pertaining to everything under the control of the will.

The infirmities of mind or body are not under the control of the will, and hence not removed by this perfection. The moral exercise of all the powers of the mind and body, subject to all their disabilities, do come under the action of the will; and hence the command, "As ye have yielded your members servants unto uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."

The simple instincts are not under the direct control of the will, and hence not essentially

changed by the work of the Holy Sanctifier in the heart. The appetites and passions, growing out of those instincts, do come within the power of the will, and must hence be controlled and kept in harmony with our conscientious standard of righteousness. When an appeal is made by Satan, or by any other agency, to any instinct of my nature, the first conscious instinctive emotion is not a moral action, for it is outside the province of the will. The appeal is indeed made to the will through the persuasive medium of the instinct; and now I must meet it promptly at the very threshold of the citadel of my moral nature, and inquire—*first*, is this right? If I conscientiously settle the question in the affirmative, then I thank God for affording me this source and means of enjoyment. *Second*, how far is this right?—for lawful gratifications may be carried to an unlawful extent, and hence become sinful. I then fix the line, and say to appetite or passion, So far shalt thou go, and no further. A mistake in judgment need not affect the purity of the heart; but the purity of the heart, on the other hand, will not exempt us from the legitimate penalties of other laws than the moral law of my conscience, which may be broken through that mistake.

But if in this examination of the said instinctive emotion appealing to my will, I decide that it is not right, I at once repudiate it as an abhorrent thing, and it is quenched, and often too, in a moment, in the all-cleansing blood of Jesus.

Again, we must have our "senses exercised" to enable us to discriminate clearly between heart alienation from God, and the wanderings of the mind from the subject, through the associations of memory, the involuntary flittings of fancy, or soarings of the imagination. Satan leads many seekers of holiness to believe that if they ever attain to such a transcendently glorious state, that they will be so perfectly abstracted from all sublunary scenes and associations, that when they contemplate God in the study of his word, or in prayer and meditation, the spell will be so enchanting to the soul that it will be next to an impossibility for their thoughts, through the power of association or the flights of imagination to wander from the rapturous theme. A certain amount of mental discipline, securing power of concentrated thought, is essential to the successful study of any subject, and the successful prosecution of any department of business; and such is attainable. But to control absolutely the associations of

memory, and the involuntary flights of the imagination, you can no more do it than you can control the lightnings of heaven! If the human mind was a simple, pliable something, that you could perfectly abstract at will, and wrap it round a single idea, like a spool of thread, all manner of mental action would be sadly embarrassed, and continuous discourse would be impossible. When I should unwrap one idea, you would have to hold on to that, and wait till I could rummage back through my brains to select and bring forth another. But with the wonderful reflex power of mind, and the associations of memory, and the wonderful power of imagination with which God hath endowed us, while I am talking I am gathering and arranging my ideas, and my illustrations of them. Meantime, by way of recreation, possibly, my mind will take a sweep round the globe, make a few calls in California, New York, London, Paris, Jerusalem, and back in a second. You had no idea while listening to my consecutive discourse, that I had been absent at all; indeed, I did not know it myself till I got back, and ran over the ground a second time to see where I had been, and all the while going on with my discourse. It is nobody's business, and neither my-

self, nor any one else has suffered on account of my mental flight. A man may be working out a problem in Euclid, and so absorbed in thought that he forgets where he is, but by the power of association he thinks of a friend of his, who worked out the solution of that problem at a certain time, and now his mind takes an imaginative flight after his friend, and chases him nearly all over the world, and back he comes to his task, and works it out. He does not stop to reproach himself for his involuntary flight. Nay, he smiles at the curious processes of his own mysterious mind, and goes on with his work.

I go to see a sick man, and while kneeling at his bedside in prayer for him, I think to myself "Poor fellow, he has had a hard journey through life—commenced under terrible disadvantages—has had no religious training, and has been struggling along, through hopes and fears, by sea and land, and now he is dying—all his worldly plans and prospects blasted, and but little hope of heaven; and here's his poor wife and beggar children in rags—what will become of them?"—praying on all the time. How did my wandering thoughts affect the case? Every new association of ideas in regard to him only increased my

sympathy on his behalf, and intensified the earnestness of prayer for him. Thus, my friend, you see that the thing that many good people so deprecate, and which becomes to them such a source of perplexity and trouble, is really a part of our mysterious nature, not necessarily a weakness nor a moral evil, but an evidence of wonderful power yet undeveloped in the human mind, and may be a means of great good. The fact is, we don’t belong to this world. We are only here temporarily imprisoned in houses of clay ; and though we cannot fathom our own being, nor grasp God’s grand ideal to be realized in our glorious future, with our consent, still by the inherent power of our undying and ever active minds, we are continually on the stretch for some new discovery, or new variety of old things, to give us employment. These powers may be turned to good or to bad account, may be properly used or abused, and hence the necessity, not only of a right appreciation of our powers, but also of a right adjustment of them, so as not to put them into antagonism with each other.

We should carefully guard against dissipation of thought, and secure the best possible measure of mental discipline ; but should not allow Satan

to get us into collision with God's own adjustment of the various powers of our mental constitution.

But whatever our estimate of these powers of association and imagination may be, to find out their moral quality we have only to ascertain whether or not they are under the control of the will, or, in each given case, whether it was by a voluntary or involuntary process. God hath made plain paths for us, and through the best exercise of our powers of mind and heart, under the leading of his Holy Spirit, we should seek those plain paths, and walk in them.

Upon the approach of foreign spirit influence, ‘try the spirits whether they be of God.’ St. John has given us a plain test: “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh”—that would lead us to confess Christ, believe on him, love and obey him—“is of God;” “but every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh”—that would lead us to distrust Christ, deny his proper divinity or humanity, disobey, and reject him—“is not of God.”

With the best exercise of our spiritual senses “to discern good and evil,” and with the experience of Christian perfection, we will find constant watch-

fulness and sharp discernment essential to enable us promptly to detect the various modes of Satanic attack—"as a roaring lion," or an "accuser of the brethren," or as "an angel of light." For illustration—I was travelling in a rail train one day near New York city, and a man in the same carriage sprang out of his seat and screamed with fright. "Oh! the train's a fire! Look! Ain't that smoke?"

"No," said I, "that is the shadow of a column of smoke passing between us and the sun outside."

Satan will often cast dark shadows through the windows, and try to make you believe there is a fearful conflagration within, and try by a sudden surprise to rob you of "your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

Again, I remark that the term perfection here is not used in the sense of apprehending and fulfilling all "that for which we are apprehended of Christ Jesus." The perfection set before us as a present attainment is the full equipment of the soldier of Christ for the good fight of faith; the other kind of perfection toward which we are ever to press is the laying off the armour and putting on the crown. Hence says St. Paul to his Philippian warriors, "Brethren, I count not my-

self to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Those who were perfect were fully prepared for the race, and are hence exhorted to run with him till they win the prize and seize the crown of glory. What, then, are the leading characteristics of Christian perfection?

CHAPTER III.

PERFECT LOYALTY TO GOD.

THE first essential pre-requisite to Christian perfection, and a leading characteristic of it throughout, is a cheerful, perfect submission to the will of God.

But says one, "I had to submit myself unreservedly to God's will before he would even pardon my sins."

So had I, and so must every sinner. God will not receive any sinner into his kingdom unless he will, without the least mental reservation, confess and forsake his sins.

Well, then, what is the difference between the sincere, unreserved submission of the penitent, and this cheerful, perfect submission of the seeker of perfection? The submission of the penitent is very much like the submission of the manslayer fleeing from the avenger of blood. As he approaches the open gate of the city of refuge, in his fright

he sees it not, but cries with a loud voice, "Open the gate ! Open the gate, and let me in !"

The porter says to him, "Will you submit to the will of the governor of this city, and keep his laws ?"

"O, yes, I will, I will ; do open the gate, and let me in. Do save me from the avenger !"

That is a sincere, unreserved submission. Why ? Because he was so much in love with the will and laws of the governor of the City of Refuge ? Practically he knew nothing about them, for he had never been inside the walls of that city in his life. He submits because his life is in jeopardy—his all is at stake ; the avenger is close after him, and he fears that every jump will be his last. Poor fellow, he will gladly do anything to save his life. A sincere, unreserved submission, but the leading motive prompting it is fear. There is intermingling with that motive, to be sure, a strong degree of desire, a degree of gratitude that a refuge has been provided, a degree of hope and faith which leads him to direct his feet with all possible dispatch to its open portal ; but the leading motive is fear.

What is the penitent sinner doing ? In the days of John the Baptist such were "fleeing from

the wrath to come." In St. Paul's time he speaks of himself, and of all the believing Hebrews, as having "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us," employing this very figure of the manslayer to illustrate it. Human nature is the same now as then, and the demands of God's laws, and his Gospel supply, the same now as then. His "sins that are past," and their dreadful consequences, present and prospective, constitute the great burden of the penitent sinner's heart, for the removal of which he weeps and prays, and flees away to the Gospel refuge. While he is driven by the law, he is attracted by the great love of God in preparing a refuge for his poor soul, and for sending his Holy Spirit to show him the way to enter into it; but it is not until after he enters, that he feels the renewing love of God shed abroad in his heart.

Now, after he is admitted into the city of refuge—adopted into the family of God indeed—he is placed in the school of Christ, under the tuition of our divine Teacher, "which is the Holy Ghost," to learn, and to prove that which he could not learn and prove in the darkness of carnal enmity, "what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God?" Some are very "dull of hearing," and

learn very slowly. Some, who appear sharp enough to learn well, learned too many crooked dogmas before they entered, and it is very hard for them to unlearn all these, and hence make very slow progress in learning "the way of the Lord more perfectly."

Some are naturally and habitually too lazy to apply themselves. Some are unduly curious and speculative. They want to learn all about the conditions of man's pristine state in Eden; whether or not there were carnivorous animals in Paradise before sin entered; whether the serpent that tempted Eve was a crawling reptile, or an animal of the monkey tribe; and a world of curious questions pertaining to this life. They want to know, too, all about heaven, the second advent of Christ, and the end of the world. Their attention is so occupied with speculative inquiries and theories, that they have but little time or heart left for the great practical duty of going on to perfection.

Some, through an unsettled, roving disposition, and through a want of discipline or mental training, readily play truant from the school of Christ; not by a wilful revolt, for that would cause their expulsion at once. No wilful sinner would be allowed to abide in this refuge a single day. But

they “are children tossed to and fro,” and may often be seen loitering about the gate, and occasionally saying one to another, “Oh ! did we not have a good time down in Egypt ? We remember ‘the fleshpots, the onions, the cucumbers and the leeks,’ how savoury they were. But for that horrible avenger of blood outside, we would go out and visit our old friends.” We may readily measure the extent of their fidelity. But for their fears, the leading motive prompting them to flee to this refuge, they would be off on short notice. When you hear a Christian laughing and talking over his great exploits while a servant of sin, you may be sure he is loitering about the gate, and entering into sympathy with those things which should never be thought of but with humiliation and shame.

These various classes thus get out of harmony with God’s arrangement for perfecting them in holiness, and hence become restless and unhappy, and seek for something else to supply the lack. As the gate stands open to let poor sinners in, they look out hoping to see some new attraction, and such now coming within range of their vision in a rapid succession of varieties, they are induced to venture out, just a little, so as to enjoy them-

selves, and though warned of their danger by frequent experiments of this sort, they become emboldened to venture further, and wander off quite beyond their own designs ; and then, when again pursued by the avenger, they run to the gate and beg for their lives—“O do let us in this once. We will be obedient ; we never will turn back again.” They are truly penitent, and sincerely intend now to lead a holy life. God kindly takes them in and gives them another trial. Some learn by the bitter experience of their backsliding, and become true and steadfast. Others, alas ! acquire such a habit of compromising with the world, that before you are aware of it they are loitering about the gate again, and wander off like lost sheep, and the avenger seizes and leads them into bondage. These are commonly called backsliders. The first fatal ground of their failure was their neglect to leave the principles and go on to perfection. That neglect disjointed their right relation to God, which gave place to the devil, who plied them with their old habits and associations until they “were entangled and overcome.”

In this school of Christ the obedient disciple sits at the feet of Jesus and learns of him ; runs in the way of his commandments, and learns of him ;

enters the arena of struggle and conflict, and learns of him. He soon ascertains through the light of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and his relations to God and society, that the will of God is much more comprehensive than he could have anticipated before he entered the school of Christ. But he, meantime, acquires such confidence in God—in his wisdom, his goodness, and his will, as the reasonable rule of his life—that he makes a consecration of himself to God, differing from that of the penitent sinner in several important facts; not different so much in kind, for it is all through the same spirit, the same atonement, and in himself a development of the same work of salvation, commenced by the Spirit of bondage to fear, carried on to saving effectiveness by the Spirit of adoption, but is now being perfected by the Holy Sanctifier, which is the same Holy Spirit that graciously commenced the work of his salvation when he was away in the wilderness of sin. But this development, nevertheless, brings out some distinct phases of the work, which I will state and explain.

1. This is an intelligent submission and consecration. As a penitent he could not practically know much about the details of Christian experience and duty, because it was a life he had never experienced.

But having had a regular course in the school of Christ, he has reached a standpoint from which he can have an appreciative view of his relations to God, and the laws of the spiritual kingdom, and he now cheerfully adjusts his entire consecration of heart and life to his enlarged perceptions of these relationships.

2. It is based on different motives. The first, as I have shown, was based mainly on his fears. This is not. He has escaped the avenger, and abides in the city of refuge, where he knows he is safe, but has acquired such confidence in God, that he can appreciate the grand fact that God's will is perfectly right in itself, and perfectly consistent with his own best interests in time and eternity, and hence gladly accepts God's will as the rule of his heart and life. It embraces "the field" containing "the hid treasure." He will cheerfully sacrifice everything necessary for its purchase. He knows that God does not require him to give up something for nothing, but to give up everything opposed to perfect heart purity, because it is but rubbish and death, to be taken out of the way to make room for "the gift of God, which is eternal life." He knows that if God should require a sacrifice of his rights for great spiritual ends, even to life itself,

that it will not only be for God's glory, but for his own eternal well-being ; and that, at any rate, his whole being belongs to God, and he now has too high an appreciation of God's lovely character to allow himself to parley with any motives that would tend to rob God of his rights, or mar his gracious purpose in saving him from all sin. He now fully acquiesces in the doctrine of St. Paul on this subject—"Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God with your body and with your spirit, which are God's." If you buy a lot of goods and pay for them, and the merchant puts them all up carefully and delivers them to your order, you don't think he did any great thing. It was just the right thing—common honesty—but if he keeps back a few articles embraced in your purchase, it is an outrage that you cannot readily pass over. To "glorify God, with our bodies and with our spirits, which are God's," is but common honesty in our relations to God. Again, St. Paul, pleading the reasonableness of God's requirements, says to his strange brethren in Rome, "For of him,"—God—"and through him, and to him, are all things ; to whom be glory for ever. Amen. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," not "by

the terrors of the Lord,” “that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” To lay the sacrifice of our entire being and all our interests on God’s altar, as wholly devoted as a burnt offering, yet not a burnt offering, but a “living sacrifice,” to be accepted and employed by the Holy Spirit according to his own good pleasure, is but “our reasonable service.” The candidate for perfect holiness gladly establishes the fact of his entire sanctification to God, and steadily maintains that fact—and will allow nothing contradictory to it to remain in his heart—because it is right and reasonable, pleasing to God, and immeasurably profitable to himself. The righteousness and reasonableness of the thing constitute the basis of his action ; but like good old Moses, he cannot lose sight of what God did not design to conceal from him—“the recompense of reward.”

3. This perfect submission embodies such a development of the principle of obedience in his heart as will perfect his loyalty to God, and at once and for ever preclude the question as to whether or not he will do his whole duty to God. The question, “What is my duty ?” is always open, as manifested daily by all God’s gracious modes of teach-

ing me, but the question whether or not in any and every case I will cheerfully accept my duty is not debateable. The perfectly loyal heart has but one question to settle in any matter of duty, and that is the simple fact of duty. This principle of cheerful obedience can only be developed in the school of Christ. Whether the period of its development embrace years, or simply minutes, that is the place of its development, and not prior to his admission into the kingdom of Jesus. Its development is promoted and demonstrated often by specific tests of obedience, rather than by a universal application to every imaginable possible duty that may arise in the future of our warfare. It was so in the case of Abraham. When he promptly offered up "his son, his dear son Isaac," as a burnt-offering, we have in that fact a demonstration of heart loyalty equal to any emergency involved by any command that God could issue—heart loyalty to the death.

This perfected principle of obedience in the heart will lead us to "abhor that which is evil," because it is abhorrent to God: and "cleave to that which is good," because it is pleasing to God. It will lead us to settle all questions of doubtful propriety pertaining to our relations to God and to society.

These questions of doubt may pertain to things essentially right, and must be done, or things essentially wrong, and must be discarded, or to things comparatively indifferent in themselves, but in view of their relation to our hearts, or our influence upon others, they become questions of doubt.

Take, for example, the popular habit of using tobacco. I would not unqualifiedly pronounce it a sin, for many good people use it; but I know with some it becomes a question of doubt, and in so far involves the principle of obedience.

Take again the popular custom in some quarters of wine drinking, with a little punch added occasionally to strengthen the desired effect. I would not under all circumstances pronounce it a sin. I can hardly conceive any circumstances of health under which it would not be considered a sin for a Christian man in the United States of America. For among nearly two millions of Methodists north and south, and about fourteen thousand travelling ministers, among whom I have an extensive acquaintance, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, I do not know of one among the ministry or laity who takes even wine as a beverage. The same I believe to be true of the large majority of all pro-

fessing Christians in America. But in my travels in other countries I have met with so many men of unquestionable piety and usefulness, both among ministers and people, who use wine and spirits, that I have been forced to the conclusion, that in view of their modes of education, and reasoning on the subject, they must have some way of reconciling it with their conscience, and therefore do neither undertake to work out the problem, reconciling their conduct with my conscience, nor sit in judgment on their consciences. "To their own master they stand or fall." If with such a man it is simply an error of his head, and his heart is perfectly loyal to God, "he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." But from the stand-point from which I and many others view the subject, with us it involves the principle of obedience. If, in the absence of tea and coffee, we had the pure juice of the grape in moderate supply, to be used occasionally as an ultimate drink simply, and not the thin end of a deceitful wedge, which opens the way for all the long list of poisonous drinks which are desolating the world, then we could under suitable wholesome restrictions use it, as it was used eighteen hundred years ago. But the cases are not parallel at all, neither as to the

nature and variety of the drinks, the alluring agencies employed to induce all classes to drink, nor in the effects produced by them. The principal point in modern drinking embraced in the ancient usctom of drinking wine, is the mere name of wine, with the small amount of adulterated grape juice that may or may not find its way into the vaults of the wine merchants. Still, as matters now stand, I might be led to think that a glass of wine occasionally would do me good, and might claim the natural right to take it, and might take my glass daily for forty years without becoming a drunkard, but then I am responsible for my influence upon society. Perhaps during those years of my taking a little, a hundred young persons might be led to imitate my example, who otherwise might not have commenced a habit so hazardous. Suppose of the hundred, only one of them should slip, and go down into a drunkard's grave, then, when "God maketh inquisition for blood," as he will; when God Almighty shall hold an inquest over that soul damned through strong drink, and by his omniscient tracings adjudges the incipient cause to be my example, and asks me to walk out, and face that man at his bar—Oh! I am afraid I should not "be able to stand!"

In the United Kingdom of Great Britain, according to statistical history, there are six hundred thousand drunkards, sixty thousand of whom go down into a drunkard's grave every year, and sixty thousand new recruits are brought down annually to fill the decimated ranks. Were any of these born drunkards? Did they not all commence life as infantile members of Christ's kingdom and family. Alas! they have fallen into bad hands since then. They have learned all this through example and association. Whose example? Association with whom? They despised the example of the drunkard, and except when linked with him by relations they could not control, they shunned such associations. Nay, they took their first lessons in the circles of moderate drinkers. They all commenced with the insidious theory of "taking just a little in moderation." Often the name of Timothy is abused by using it as a pretext, overlooking the fact that among the Greeks in those days it was unlawful, under the penalty of death, for a man to drink wine till he reached the age of thirty years, and after that only when diluted with two-thirds of water, unless prescribed by a physician. Timothy's father being a Greek, and himself having been trained up under such a rigid temperance

law, he required the command of an inspired apostle, so to embolden his conscience as to enable him to take a little wine as a medicine. (See Dr. Clarke's comment on the passage.)

Thus by taking just a little, through all sorts of persuasive influences, sixty thousand annually are swept off from this most enlightened Christian country—the United Kingdom of Great Britain—an aggregate of over one million and a quarter every twenty-one years ! All deprecated the horrors of the late American War, but, thank God, it is over, probably never to be repeated, and by the overruling Providence of God, grand moral results will follow, with their gracious compensations ; but this war of Satan against humanity, through strong drink, with all the variety of agencies employed in carrying it on, is not over. No suspension of hostilities, not even for a single day. Does it not become every friend of human-kind to ask himself, or herself, “ Am I directly or indirectly an accomplice in this sanguinary war against my race ? What can I do in the way of self denial, or effort to stop it, or lessen its woes ? ”

My dear friend, I adduce these examples to illustrate a great principle pertaining to every question of doubt in your heart, or in your family,

or social, or business relationships. The question of moderate drinking is certainly embraced in St. Paul's clearly defined doctrine of Christian expediency. Christian expediency is a very different thing from worldly expediency. The one usually involves a sacrifice of principle for self. The other usually involves a voluntary sacrifice of self for the sake of high Christian principle. A man forfeits no rights in becoming a Christian; but if he sees in any given case that a strict maintenance of his rights will, through the perverted disjointed conditions of society, work injuriously to the souls of others, he voluntarily foregoes his rights, and for the sake of Jesus, and his love of souls, cheerfully denies himself, of property rights, by not "going to law with a brother before the unjust," or of personal gratification, declining "to drink wine," or do "anything whereby a brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Why should I, for the sake of personal gratification, "cause a weak brother to perish, for whom Christ died." He denied himself, even to death, to save that very man; and can I, possessing "the same mind" of self-sacrifice "that was in Christ," indulge in anything that would jeopardize the soul of another? Now, what I ask of any Christian man or woman,

in the name of the Lord, is that they deal honestly with themselves and with God. Though I have chosen the drinking custom, because of its insinuating and dreadful evils, to illustrate a great principle, I leave its application to this, and to all other questions of doubt, to your own enlightened judgment, well instructed in gospel principles, and the moral quality and effects of these indulgences involving a doubt, and beg you, if you do not consent to self-deception, and to perish by mistake, to settle all these questions at the bar of your own conscience. Do not allow the accuser to take advantage of you, and break down the law of obedience by making the way so narrow as to render it impossible for you to walk in it, nor the assumed angel of light to make it so wide as to lead you to hell instead of to heaven, where you want to go. Avail yourself of all the sources and facilities of light which God hath furnished you. Give your own common sense and conscience fair play. Do nothing simply because the honourable Mr. Presumption does it. We are responsible for the exercise of our own powers, and "every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Settle all those questions of doubt affirmatively, if you can,

"This is right," and "that is right." Maintain and vindicate the right; but if there are any of you can't settle in the affirmative, then give your poor soul the benefit of the doubt. "He that doubteth is condemned." Just in proportion to the doubt, whether the thing in itself be right or wrong, so is the guilt and condemnation.

The development and demonstration of the heart-principle of obedience, up to perfect loyalty to God, must embrace the settlement of all those questions, and at once and for ever preclude the debate even in our hearts, whether or not we will decline any possible duty that our gracious God will enjoin. It is by no means a severe principle. In a subordinate sense, you expect that much of every servant you employ, in whatever department of business. If your servant is guilty of disregarding your orders, and of indulging in things forbidden and offensive, and you call him to answer, and he offer such apologies as we hear from the lips of professing Christians, would you keep such a servant in your employ?

"Did you not know that it was your duty to do thus, or so?"

"O yes."

“Well, why did you not do it?”

“O, I didn’t feel like it.”

Indeed!

You do not allow a sailor to debate the question of duty. When he goes in the shipping office and “signs the articles,” and reports himself to his captain, he well understands that navigation demands authority and subordination; and while he is not responsible for the conduct of the ship, it is his duty to obey orders, no matter how hazardous. In the rising gale, when the master orders him aloft to “close reef,” you will hear him respond, amid the thunder of the hurricane, “Ay, ay, sir;” and up the rigging he runs with his life in his hand.

You expect that much of every soldier that enters the Queen’s service. You expect him to be loyal to the death. You all endorse the loyalty and heroism of the light brigade at Balaklava, as given by your celebrated poet, Mr. Tennyson, when the command was given to charge for the guns, as a sort of standard of British bravery:—

“Forward, the light brigade!”

Was there a man dismay’d?

Not though the soldier knew

Some one had blunder’d:

Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why,
Their's but to do and die!
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Only about eighty of the "whole brigade" survived the crash of arms that ensued.

That seems hard, and yet you say, "The honour and stability of our great nation, and the prestige of our arms, demand just such unswerving, uncomplaining, heroic loyalty." Granted, but is it not a poor pitiful thing if we can't have perfect loyalty to God—cool, unflinching fidelity to the death? A shipmaster may be tyrannical; a general may err, as was the case at Balaklava; but the all-wise God cannot err. The immutably righteous God cannot be tyrannical. His service "is a reasonable service." "His commandments are not grievous." What a scandal to the religion of Jesus that men and women professing to love God should, so far from conforming to this most reasonable principle of perfect loyalty to God, set themselves against the principle itself, and maintain that "it is even impossible for poor human nature to attain to such a standard." Cannot any man, even with the smallest development of common sense and piety

see the reasonableness of this principle, and of its necessity in order to the attainment of that “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.” If the Holy Spirit hath graciously given you light on this vital subject, “walk in the light while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.” If you say, “Well, I will think about it,” but fail to act, you will “quench the Spirit,” and injure your spiritual receptivity more than before you received this superior light of the Spirit. Bring your sacrifice, my dear christian reader, “bind it with cords,” lay it on God’s altar, and steadily keep it there till the day of your death.

CHAPTER IV.

PERFECTION OF FAITH.

THE *second* essential pre-requisite to Christian perfection, and characteristic of it throughout, is a perfection of faith; not a miraculous working faith, not a faith that will presume to effect the irresistible conversion of a soul, or anything contrary to the laws of God; but a faith that clearly apprehends in the light of the Holy Spirit's revealing, the woes and wants of my soul, and that apprehends in Christ, through the Spirit's interpretation and application of God's "record concerning" his Son, a perfect remedy for my woes, a perfect supply for my wants, and that makes this moment, and every successive moment of life, a personal appropriation of that remedy and that supply to my needy case. It implies, first, perfect confidence in God—confidence in his wisdom, his goodness, his will; confidence in his gospel provisions and promises; confidence in the

efficacy of Christ's atonement, his all-cleansing blood, and intercessions; confidence in the good will and effectiveness of the personal Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father for the very purpose of saving poor sinners from all their sins. This faith, in connection with perfect submission to God's will, as before described, and it cannot exist without it, must bring the believer into that perfect oneness with God indicated by, and embraced in, the last prayer the Saviour uttered before he entered the garden of Gethsemane. On behalf of his disciples he prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Then he prays for us and all believers—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Perfect submission, and perfect faith, are the essential conditions to this oneness with God. It is in this oneness with God that the saving purpose and provisions of God have their appropriate

demonstration, in the experience of believers, and their manifestation to the world; and hence the necessity of this attainment through which the world is to believe, and be saved.

Perfect faith is a simple, reasonable thing, yet thoroughly effective. Why should we not have perfect confidence in God, and in all his gracious arrangements? All this talk, we are accustomed to hear, about the incomprehensible mystery of faith in God, is an outrage on our common sense, and a wicked reflection on God, assuming that he hath suspended salvation on a condition that the mass of mankind cannot understand, or fulfil. Such persons usually look upon unbelief as a very natural, reasonable thing, and a very innocent little infirmity. They would not like to confess that they had been guilty of dishonesty or falsehood, but they think nothing of confessing their unbelief. But the fact is, unbelief is the dreadful sin that peoples perdition, and the most God-dishonouring, unreasonable thing in the world. For example, here is a young man who has been blessed with a wise, wealthy, pious father. It has been the ruling passion of that father's heart, from the time that son was born, to make him happy. He never deceived him, never treated him unkindly, but

did everything that wisdom, love, and money, could do, to develop him, and prepare him for a happy and useful life.

After he has thus "nourished and brought him up," the son says to him, "Father, you have been very kind to me, I cannot deny that, but I am sorry to have to say after all, that I cannot have confidence in you. I cannot believe your promises; I do indeed assent to them, but I am afraid there will be a slip somewhere; I shall never be able to realize them." The unreasonable ingrate almost kills his father, with what many seem to regard as an innocent infirmity. God "hath nourished and brought us up," hath made every provision necessary for our well-being in this world and for ever; never told us a falsehood; hath given us in the Holy Scriptures, and in the Holy Spirit's manifestation to our hearts, and in his gracious providence over us, the most reliable basis of faith in the world; and yet many Christians, who have believingly accepted Christ in the pardon of their sins, presume to indulge in this dreadful unbelief in relation to the full development and perfection of God's work in their souls. O my dear reader, that will never do! It is a leprous taint in your soul that will yet destroy you, unless you get rid of it. You

secretly ground your want of confidence in God on your previous failures to realize entire heart purity. The failure was not on God's part, but your own. You either did not yield yourself perfectly to him, or submitting, did not believingly accept his adequate supply in Christ.

But says one, “I do not blame God for my failure to be holy, I know it is my own fault.” If so, you can remove the ground of failure, and you must do it, or it will ruin you.

“But I cannot do it; I have tried again, and again.”

“Indeed. If that is so, then, after all, it is not your fault, for God never requires an impossibility of anybody.” So you see through the deceitful working of your horrible unbelief, while your lips confess the guilt of failure, your heart really charges it upon God.

“O no, I do not blame God with it. It is because of my associations in the world, and the temptations of Satan.”

God's provisions are perfectly adapted to all legitimate relationships in this life, and are entirely adequate to any emergency of worldly or Satanic antagonism. “My grace is sufficient for thee,” is an emphatic declaration of God that applies to

every believer in the world. Nay, my friend, the ground of failure lies between God and your own spirit. If you dare to charge God with it, then accept this challenge from his own mouth:—
“Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the king of Jacob.”
“O, my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.”
If you cannot face God avowedly with such a charge, hush those secret heart whispers of unbelief which contradict the statements of your lips. Give no quarter to that accursed unbelief. War against it, through all God’s available provisions, as you would against a serpent in your house. If you sleep with the deadly snake in your room, you may find its fatal coil around your neck in the morning. You must submit perfectly to God’s will, or incur the penalty of disobedience. Submitting, you must dare to believe, or take the consequences of unbelief. If your voluntary associations with the world are antagonistic to holiness, then meet the difficulty fairly. You will have to give up your ungodly associations, or give up God. “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or

what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing? and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." All legitimate relationships in life, I repeat, are provided for, and may be maintained in harmony with holiness; but all voluntary associations damaging to our spiritual life and usefulness are forbidden, and must be abandoned. If you consent to a divorce from forbidden associations and habits, and present your body a living sacrifice to God, then at once do what you consent to do, and having done it, steadily maintain the fact of your entire submission to God's will, and you will then not find it at all difficult to believe God's promise—"I will receive you."

"But suppose he does not receive me?" That is not a supposable case. God says, "I will receive you." Satan says, "He will not receive you," and your own unbelief says, "O, I'm sure he will not

receive me," and of course he will not, so long as you practically ignore God's facts, and credit Satan's lies.

"But what if I do not get the witness that he doth receive me?" That is not your business. Your duty is to establish and maintain the fact of your entire consecration, and the fact of your acceptance of Christ, for all that he hath engaged to do for you. The work of regeneration and purification, and the attesting witness to the work, is the business of the Holy Spirit, on the fulfilment of those two conditions on your part; and all that is as much a matter of available provision, and immutable promise as the atonement itself, or any other portion of God's perfected provision of salvation. You must repose perfect confidence in your Holy Sanctifier.

I would not discourage any whose faith is very feeble, for I know well how to sympathise with them. I do not suppose that any poor soul has ever had harder battles with unbelief, and conquer, than I have had in my early Christian experience. But I greatly desire, my dear reader, that you may fully understand the true character of unbelief: that you may not make terms with it, but fight against it to the death. The Holy Spirit will

reveal the strongholds of this hateful thing within you, just as fast as your developing faith acquires strength to grapple with it, and eject it by the power of Jesus, from your heart.

In the development of our faith from pardon to perfection, we have to encounter and overcome several formidable obstructions in the form of insidious practical errors. One of the most common among feeble believers, as well as among penitent sinners, is a modification and practical form of the old Jewish error that St. Paul so clearly indicated when he said, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God"—a sincere zeal for God—"but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God"—to God's righteous method of saving them by faith alone, and not by the works of the law. It is not a theoretical error with us, as with them, but an insidious practical error into which we fall, and under the paralyzing effect of which many suffer for years, before they find out the nature of their disability. Now, my friend, if you please, I will explain to you wherein this error

has existed in your experience, and in that of most believers, in the past, and wherein it exists in the experience of very many of them to-day. How often have you approached the altar of consecration with a determination to be holy ! You wept at the mercy-seat of God, confessed your need of heart purity, mourned over your past unfaithfulness, presented your sacrifice to God, and renewed your covenant. You arranged in your own mind a beautiful programme for holy living—“To pray in your family morning and evening, to pray in your closet three times per day, to attend all the stated means of grace, visit the sick, give liberally to charitable objects, and in short discharge every duty of Christian life ; and you felt a considerable degree of comfort in having renewed your covenant—quite an inflation of hope, anticipating the good time coming, when you shall have performed all these good things. You retired with buoyant hope and sincere desire to carry out your pious purposes to perfection, and you did the praying and all the other good things you promised, so far as the outward acts were concerned, but as for the development and perfection of the spiritual life within, you just missed it. One fortnight proved to you that in regard to the inner life—the essential

thing in your experience—you had not been any better, nor done any better, than before your special consecration. Hope was deferred, your heart became very sick, and you scarcely knew what next to do. But upon a careful examination, you thought you found out the ground of your failure—"Not sufficiently watchful, have not carefully guarded those weak points in my experience—those peculiar besetments which I suffer at every unguarded gap." With this discovery your flagging hopes revived, and you were encouraged to try it again. Then you approached the altar of God with greater solemnity and self-abasement. You mourned, and wept, and confessed your repeated failures, submitted your helpless soul to God, and again renewed your covenant, and bound yourself most solemnly in a vow, for God to live and for God to die. Some write out their vows and put them into their Bibles, as reminders of their solemn engagements with God. You have tried it again and again with increasing zeal, which gave you quite a reputation for piety among your neighbours; but, alas, in your heart you felt that each succeeding effort was as blank a failure as the first. Thus many sincere persons spend years in earnest struggling, and remain but dwarfs in religion.

They have a great deal of motion without progression, like a door on its hinges. They travel in a circle, like a horse in a “puddling-machine,” or in a bark-mill.

Now, what is the matter? There is something wrong. There is a screw loose somewhere, certainly as that you live.

It cannot be that you are not sincere, for I am specially addressing sincere persons.

Not because of any defect in the genuineness of your conversion to God, in the first place, for I am addressing such as were truly pardoned, and adopted into the family of God.

Not that you have wilfully departed from the Lord, for I am not addressing such. I have been describing the experience of persons who were “justified by faith, and obtained peace with God,” and who still have a measure of saving faith, and some degree of spiritual development, but whose faith is sadly trammelled in its exercise, and defeated in its grand end of full salvation from all sin, including specially the sin of unbelief, and the “purging of the conscience from dead works.”

Many such, to be sure, have given up the inward struggle, and settled down in mere outward

formality, with "a name to live while they are dead."

Others, too honest to live under a false guise, or too licentious to bear the outward restraints of religion, return to their sins, according to the homely illustration of St. Peter, as "The dog is turned to his vomit again: and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

But those who have not only maintained the form, but kept up the spiritual struggle, have divided into a variety of classes, from the feeblest dwarfs up to perfect men, filling "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Now, my dear friend, it cannot be the will of our heavenly Father that any sincere soul should struggle so hard, and so long, as many have done, with so little to show for it. For many, after the experience of years, feel in their hearts the humiliating fact, that they have not as much meekness, patience, humility, zeal for God and the souls of men, nor as much love to God and the brethren, as they had the first week of their adoption into the family of God. Hence, they always look back to that period as the brightest of their whole Christian life. It was indeed a glorious event never to be forgotten, but surely their subse-

quent experience in Christian life must be far below God's standard, which is indicated by the wise man thus: "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And thus by St. John, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." In a healthy development of faith and purity, each succeeding year of our experience should be brighter than its predecessor.

How shall we be able to detect the error which thus trammels our faith, and defeats its grand purposes? I can give you, my dear reader, the theory of truth necessary for its detection, but God, the Holy Sanctifier, alone, can give you the light, by which you may come to Jesus and have it removed. That he will gladly do, provided you consent to be holy without any "ifs or buts," or stipulations of your own.

Well, just at the altar of consecration, where you so often prayed, confessed, consecrated yourself, and renewed your covenant, stood your Almighty Saviour, waiting to impart salvation, free and full, to your aching heart; but at the moment of your entire submission, when you should have believed,

what did you do? Why, you renewed your covenant, which directed your longing eyes away from Jesus to a future fulfilment of your vows; and it was implied in your mind, "then I will be brought into the sweet union with God I so much desire." You substituted a renewed covenant for present believing, nay, for a present Saviour; you arose and went away, and left Jesus "standing there at the door knocking" for admission. Instead of opening the door to admit him in all the fullness of his saving power, without which it was impossible for you to do better, with a pious vow in your mouth you retired through a backway, to your own dreary work, as weak as before. How could you do any better, when you missed connection with the source of light and life? If you wish to irrigate an orchard of fruit trees, your beautiful ditches of good works will do no good unless you lift the flood-gate and turn on the water. At that important point of submission, to be sure, you ignored the record of your past works, pronounced them filthy rags, and threw them away, but what then did you do? You gravely promised the Lord some more of the same sort, or as you believed an improved article. You told the Lord you certainly would do better next time, but a fortnight's experience proved to you

that they were of the same sort precisely, and not a bit better than the old stock. Then the old "accuser of the brethren," and the sisters as well, came in upon you like a flood, and you said to yourself, "dear me, what shall I do? I thought I had gotten such a start in the way of holiness that I never would get back here again! But here I am in the same old formal track, subject to the same petty annoyances, doubts, and fears."

O, how glad how I was when the Lord, in mercy, revealed to my heart this insidious practical error of "going about." It is the more difficult of detection because everything embraced in those vows and covenants is a good thing, and how such a good thing, or combination of good things, can involve such a radical error, sapping the very foundations of our religious experience, is the problem to be solved. The desire that led to these vows is all right, for God the Spirit wrought it in your heart; and vows and covenants are right, in so far as they are a means of bringing you to a present perfect surrender to God, and a present acceptance of Jesus, as your present perfect Saviour. But as you are running on the Gospel track, under the pressure of this heaven-wrought desire, into the depot of full salvation, look out

there, look out! just at the entrance of the depot, the devil adjusts a very ingenious “switch,” and if you are not careful, you will be caught on this satanic “switch,” and carried off the direct, and only track, leading into this glorious depot, on to the old circuitous Jewish track of going “about to establish your own righteousness, instead of submitting yourself to the righteousness of God;” and round and round you will go, and wonder why you do not get in.—“Almost in,” you say to yourself, “I can see in. Surely I will get in soon.” Surely you never will get in on that track. It don’t lead in at all. It is the wrong road. I spent several years on that road, and have thoroughly threaded upon my knees this dark labyrinth of legal complications, and am, hence, from experience, somewhat prepared to give advice to my young friends, and profoundly to sympathize with them in their struggles.

When I got light on this subject I changed the order of the arrangement at once.

I said, “O Lord, I have been very unfaithful, and I am very sorry”—not that I had yielded to known sin. I had been struggling to be holy from the night I was converted to God, and had been preserved from any wilful departures from God—

“I have tried a hundred times to be holy, and failed every time. I am very sorry, but, O God, I have no confidence in the flesh, or in any efforts of my own. I have tried, and tried, till my heart is sick. I know I will never be any better, nor do any better, unless my heart is made better. However much I may desire it, and however sincerely I may try, I am sure I can never be any better than I have been, nor do better than I have done, unless renewed in the spirit of my mind.” I was indeed stripped of all hope from anything I had done, or could do. Not a peg in all the future of my life, no more than the past, on which to hang a hope, or furnish ground for a postponement. Then the crucifixion of the flesh, with its fallacious hopes and plans of reformation, dressed up in the most pious phraseology as they are, was fully accomplished. My conscience was purged of dead works, and I was let down into the vale of self-abasement and self-despair, and down in that vale of self-conscious impotency my feet rested firmly on the “rock of ages cleft for me,” and Jesus “was made of God unto me wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification.” Then I learned practically, what I had all through believed as a theory, that as in justification by faith, so in the entire sancti-

fication of the heart, it was "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." If so, why not now, or the very moment the Holy Spirit reveals the inherent and accumulated corruptions of our nature, and the plague of unbelief in the heart?

In this experience of full salvation from sin, unbelief, and dead works, I did not attain to the beatific altitude of Mount Nebo, and exult in visions of heavenly glory, but received a new baptism of legal fire, that consumed those dead works and fallacious hopes; and in utter self-conscious helplessness I learned to cling to Jesus in all the simplicity of a child. No longer saying, with self-confident Peter, "Though all deny thee, yet will not I. Though I die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;" but rather, "Every moment, Lord, I need the merit of thy death." If left to myself for one moment, that very moment I will sin against thee. Not that I have any sympathy with sin. I abhor it more than death, but self-confidence is abnegated. I know that such is the helplessness of human nature in this struggle, and such the

number and potency of the evil influences that surround me, that nothing short of the almighty power of Jesus can keep my heart from sinning. The purified heart feels, as no other heart can, its utter helplessness; but it never relaxes effort, nor adopts the complaining apology of wicked unbelief, and say, "Poor human nature, it can do nothing, and it is no use to try." Nay, the very light of the purifying spirit that reveals our utter helplessness, reveals the remedy, adequate and available now, and every moment to the end of life. We can hence joyfully sing with the sainted Wesley—

"Every moment, Lord, I have
The merit of thy death."

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." "I am crucified with Christ," says St. Paul, "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

When I was thus crucified with Christ in the full and final destruction of self-dependence, I learned the happy art of living by faith in the Son of God, and then the good things embraced in my

oft-repeated vows and covenants, I secure of course as the legitimate fruit of a present entire consecration to God, steadily maintained as a fact, and my perfect confidence in God's provisions and promises as immutable facts, and my present acceptance of Christ for all that he hath engaged to do for me; never for a moment to question whether he will do this or that, which is embraced in his covenant engagement, but gratefully accepting his facts with unwavering confidence, momentarily “live by faith in the Son of God.” He that “thus believeth shall never be confounded.” I have thus been enabled, through extraordinary vicissitudes and trials, to walk by faith for over twenty years. Never since I was thus “crucified” and “purged from dead works” have I made any vows pertaining to the inner life, and looking to a future fulfilment.

If a man has occasion to promise to God or man to do anything within his power, let him vow and pay in due time. And sinners and believers, who have been vowing to be the Lord's, let them “pay their vows now, unto the Lord, in the presence of all his people.” But the practical end to be realized is a present surrender to God, and a present acceptance of Christ, and in him the fulfilment of all his covenant provisions and engagements. If

the beautiful form of covenant used by Wesleyans, the first sabbath of the new year, is carefully guarded by the individuals using it, so as to make it an instrument of leading at once to this vital covenant union with Christ, and not on to the fatal old route of "going about to establish their own righteousness," it must be an instrument of good to them.

A local preacher in Tasmania came to me one morning holding out in his hand the said little covenant book. His tears were flowing freely. They were tears of joy, mixed with surprise and regret. Said he, "Do you see this little book? I have been repeating this covenant for many years. It is a **very** good thing, but it has been the means of promoting in my experience the dreadful error of going about, instead of submitting and accepting now. It is not the fault of the book, but of my blind unbelief."

A man who is perfectly loyal to his country is not continually promising that he will be. It is a fixed fact that he steadily maintains, and exemplifies.

A man who is simply honest, is not continually pledging himself that he will not outrage the rights of his neighbour.

A man of truth is not repeating his vows and pledges, not to tell lies. Vows and pledges belong in the main to those who have outraged, disjointed relationships with God or society, to repair; but when a man has been brought into his right relation, let him avowedly and honourably maintain it. To hear a man repeatedly pledging himself to do the honest thing, at once furnishes ground of suspicion that there is within him a conscious defect in his own integrity. And yet an honest man is not indifferent as to his reputation for integrity, but steadily maintains the true principles of it in his own heart, manifests it appropriately in his outward relations, and vindicates it if assailed.

On the first Sabbath of this year I had the pleasure of attending the "Covenant Meeting" at Old City-road Chapel. Rev. Gervase Smith, the superintendent of the circuit, kindly invited me to address the audience. In the course of my remarks I said, "I don't believe that Christians should ever be under the necessity of renewing their covenant with God. Our relation to God is illustrated in the Scriptures by the marriage relation. It is common in this country for persons of all classes to observe the anniversary of their wedding-day. What is the object of that? Is it

to make confession that they have broken their matrimonial vows, dishonoured the sacred bond that made them one, and now, on this appropriate anniversary occasion they will make their humble confession, duly repent, and renew their covenant? Is it not rather for the review of the fully established and well-defined fact, running through all their experiences from year to year, that they have mutually maintained toward each other, mid all their trials, toils, bereavements, and sorrows, that confidence, fidelity, and love appropriate to the holy bonds of matrimony, a divine institution of Eden, through which they have enjoyed many mercies.

“Our relation to God is also illustrated by the relation of a soldier to his king. We occasionally have a grand military review. What is the object of that? Is it to expose whole regiments of disloyal cowards who have failed to do their duty, make them go down on their knees, and renew their covenant oath to be true to their Queen and their country? Is it not rather a public recognition of the fact that they have, mid all the perils of war, honourably maintained their loyalty, and bravely stood by their colours to the death.

“One regiment after another is pointed out as

the noble band that distinguished themselves in India, China, or Russia, and in some way, all would be recognised as loyal heroic soldiers, whose past record is a guarantee, without a renewal of their covenant oath of allegiance, that they are ready, at their country's call, for any emergency.

“ Now this covenant service is not a military review, but the mass of this large assembly are professed soldiers of Christ, who have assembled to celebrate their great covenant anniversary, in memory of their first enlistment as soldiers, and their marriage with their Divine Bridegroom. All such persons as have by his abounding grace, maintained their unswerving loyalty to God, their unwavering confidence in him, their unalloyed love for him, which is but ‘their reasonable service,’ will not have to renew their covenant to-day. They will bow themselves in humble adoration at the feet of Jesus, and by the covenant tests, which will be put during this interesting and solemn service, they will review the record of their heart experiences and lives during the past year, and in clear recognition of the fact, that through the abiding presence of the personal Holy Spirit, they have through faith in Jesus, been kept in their right loyal relation to God their divine Sovereign.

and now under the approving smile of their covenant-keeping Saviour, they will again set up their Ebenezer, and, oh! what a glorious feast of love they will enjoy. But any of you who have not been true to God, you who have not stood by your colours, not confessed Christ before men, you who have not unflinchingly maintained heart loyalty to him, and exemplified it in word and deed, why down on your knees, confess your sins, and your sinfulness, surrender your poor souls to God, and accept Christ as your Saviour from all sin, renew your covenant to-day for the last time, establish and steadily maintain to the day of your death that loyalty, faith, love and obedience becoming soldiers of God, nay the Bride of the lamb."

Another error in the experience of many believers, usually allied to this legal struggle of "going about" is the effort to predicate their faith upon their feelings. When they feel strong joyous emotion, they seem to have strong faith, but when their feelings ebb, their faith sinks proportionately. Their whole religious life seems to be made up of impulsive struggles, fitful and variable as a weather vane. Well, that is immeasurably better than rebellion against God, but there is a "more excellent way."

Our feelings are liable to a thousand changes, it may be, from causes within and without, over which we have no control, but our loyalty to God should not change, our confidence in God should not change. All the feeling I ask in order to the maintenance of a perfect faith in Jesus is the consciousness of my perfect submission to his will. Maintaining the fact of my entire consecration to God, I have only to trust him—believingly accept his perfected provision in Christ. “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in”—providential—“darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”

A minister of the Gospel in Illinois once said to me, “It is very hard to trust in God under those dark providences in which one cannot see the hand of the Lord.”

I believe the good Spirit suggested the thought to my mind, with which I replied, in simplicity, “My brother, if you cannot trust a man out of your sight, that fact is in evidence that you have no confidence in him.” Now, we ought to have sufficient confidence in God to trust him, whether we see him or not. It is the province of faith to walk in the dark, and thus lead us into the light

of joyous experience. The kingdom of heaven is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The essential embodiment of it is righteousness. There is not much emotional feeling in that. Peace is a blessed fruit of it, that will become abiding in proportion to the healthy development and steady exercise of our faith. "Joy in the Holy Ghost" is the boiling point of joyous emotion, the very intensity of which precludes the possibility of its constancy. It would keep us continually on the mount of transfiguration, while our duties lie mainly in the battle field below.

The fiery ordeal necessary for "the trial of our faith" may often for a season suspend the sweet consciousness of those precious fruits of peace and joy. Then we must walk firmly by simple faith. "The just shall live by faith." "We walk by faith, not by sight," or mere sense of feeling. We have an illustration of this in the experience of father Abraham, when by divine command he laid a sacrifice upon the altar. Having fulfilled the condition on his part, he stood back to see the fire of God come down and consume the sacrifice; but it did not come. His sacrifice lay there in the heat of the sun till the scent of it attracted the eagles and vultures. It was very discouraging.

Just there many give up the struggle for entire holiness ; for when you “ present your body a living sacrifice ” to God you may be sure the fowls will be down upon you in all their variety, diabolical and human. But Abraham was not to be done out of his right relation to God by any such discouragements. “ When the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abraham drove them away.” They stood no chance at all before the “ waddy ” of the old veteran. Thus the dreary day of waiting passed away, and no attesting fire from heaven. “ And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram ; and, lo ! an horror of great darkness fell upon him.” Poor old patriarch ! he probably had not felt so badly for a year, as just then in the act of high obedience to God. Just in that emergency many doubting souls fail, at the very threshold of full salvation. The very ordeal necessary for developing and testing their faith becomes the occasion of discouragement and demoralisation. What a pity ! O if such would steadily maintain their facts, and stand by faith, it would soon bring them into glorious liberty. Abram patiently endured the sleepy chill upon his feelings, and “ the horror and the great darkness,” and he would have waited there doubtless till the

blasts of winter would have blown upon his bleaching bones. When his faith was thus sufficiently tried, God revealed himself in matchless mercy to the heart of his confiding servant, and his faith achieved one of the grandest victories of his life.

During a recent series of religious services in the city of Adelaide, I heard a worthy brother in a public fellowship meeting say, "I determined, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to establish and maintain my facts, according to the instructions we received from the pulpit. Fifty times a day, for more than a week, I presented my body a living sacrifice on the altar of God, or reascertained the fact that I was wholly submitted to his will, but got no relief; but I stood to it, clinging to Jesus, and then after a week or two of patient waiting and believing, fifty times a day I realized that the blood of Jesus Christ did cleanse me from all sin. I realize daily now that it cleanseth me from all sin." Six months have elapsed, and he is still maintaining his facts, and walking in the light.

This brother's case is but an illustrative example of many scores of the same kind, which have come under my own observation.

CHAPTER V.

PERFECTION OF FAITH—CONTINUED.

THAT act of believing, which instrumentally brings us into our true relation, of holiness unto the Lord, may appropriately be regarded as perfect faith, in the good sense of exactly serving the purpose for which it was designed; but it is not merely an isolated exercise of faith bringing us into harmony with God, but a momentary, continuous exercise, keeping us in harmony with God. The very conditions of our being, and our associations, require a continuous cleansing of the heart. The legitimate exercise of our essential appetites, passions, and powers of mind and body, and their contact with the impurities of this world, would, no doubt, lead to moral contamination, but for this momentary cleansing. The blood, for illustration, in its circulation through the system becomes charged with carbonic acid gas, and other impuri-

ties, and requires a momentary cleansing. If, having returned through the veins to the heart, it is allowed to go out through the arteries in this impure state, it will poison the whole system, and sap the foundations of life. Where shall we obtain a purifying element to meet this demand? Whatever is really necessary for mind, body, or heart, God hath supplied in great abundance, and the application, under suitable conditions, is simple and easy. This demand of the blood has its supply in the oxygen of the atmosphere. The supply is inexhaustible. God hath enveloped the world with it to a depth of nearly fifty miles, and the application is easy. For every jet of blood thrown through the ventricle of the heart into the lungs we inhale a portion of air. The blood is thus oxygenized, and purged of its impurities and returned to the heart, whence it is thrown out through the arteries, conveying vitality and strength to every part of the system. The poison is thus continually purged out, and thrown off with every respiration.

The same God, who provides so amply for this demand of the body, provides with a profusion of supply, worthy of himself, in the purifying atmosphere of the all-cleansing blood of Jesus; the

condition of its application, believing, corresponding with the continuous act of breathing. Not a wearisome, laborious exercise, but simple and easy; and becomes increasingly so by habit, if the conditions are suitable. But notwithstanding the abundant supply of air, many persons die for want of it, not because of any deficiency of supply, but because their position in close rooms, or low miasmatic regions, deprives them of access to it; or their condition of health, as in asthmatic diseases, for example, renders the application very difficult. So, spiritually, if a soul abides in close rooms of selfishness, or in the low, sickly regions of unbelief, or becomes asthmatic through sinful compromises, the application of the purifying blood is rendered difficult, or impossible, in proportion to its want of suitable adjustment to the laws of the kingdom of Jesus. On the mount of holiness, the purifying breezes blow continually. There the clear light shines high above the dense fogs that spread over the vales beneath. There we “walk in the light, as God is in the light, and have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” On the orbit of the soul’s right spiritual relation to God the “Sun of righteousness” never sets. It is

its eccentric deviations from its orbit that brings it into spiritual darkness, and into collision with other bodies, often, too, with such terrible concussions as to produce scars and fissures which it will carry to the judgment. It is a great mercy that, though it may involve penalties of a physical or constitutional character, which, though often incurable in this life, will not preclude the restoration of the soul to its spiritual orbit, or its moral harmony with God. It is impossible to violate law without laying ourselves liable to its penalties, and although physical laws are inferior, and often subordinated to moral law, still it is evidently not the design of the Saviour to change the general administration of his physical and providential government to accommodate the irregularities of his saved people in their relation to those laws in this life. Though their spiritual relation may be in perfect harmony with God's gospel arrangements, if they, through mistake, violate any physical law pertaining to their own bodies, or laws of society, such as financial, social, or civil laws, they must as certainly become obnoxious to penalty as the vilest rebel against God. Moreover, Christian perfection does not necessarily secure any temporal advantage under the natural government of God, but may often, for

purposes of discipline, involve peculiar disabilities in the form of persecutions, and providential reverses in all their variety.

A Christian's faith can hardly be said to be perfected unless he can intelligently reconcile these apparently adverse facts in his experience with God's gracious purpose and providential administration over him. It was a prominent feature in St. Paul's instructions to his infant churches thoroughly to explain this subject. It was the more necessary because of the various erroneous expectations entertained as to the character and ends of Messiah's mission.

The Jews expected extraordinary political advantages, and all who waited for his coming seemed to expect deliverance from the temporal woes under which the whole creation had been groaning from the first introduction of sin into the world. Hence "the earnest expectation of the creature"—physical humanity—"waited for the manifestation of the sons of God," to see in them specimens of the delivering power of him who had avowedly come "to restore all things." But they saw in the example of St. Paul, Silas, Luke, Timotheus, and all the rest, men of "like passions with themselves," not only subject to the ordinary disabilities of man-

kind, but peculiarly exposed “to reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses for Christ’s sake.” The thing was extremely ridiculous to unbelievers, and taken as conclusive evidence that Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah, or that he had failed in his mission, or that those suffering followers of his were great hypocrites; and hence left to suffer. Although the young believers would reject such conclusions from those premises, still these disappointing distressing facts in their experience were shocking to their faith.

Most likely St. Paul anticipated that the saving, tried, fruitful faith of the believers in Thessalonica, might be defective in its application to this very thing, when he says in his first letter to them, in his yearning sympathy on their behalf, “Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the Gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith; that no man should be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that ye were appointed thereunto. For, verily, when we were with you we told you before that we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye know.

For this cause, when I could no longer forbear I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.” When Timothy returned, bringing him “ ‘good tidings’ of their faith and charity,” he was comforted, and filled with joy on their behalf, but still felt such desire for the perfecting of their faith that he goes on to say, “For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God ; night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith.” If he succeeded in perfecting “that which was lacking in their faith,” then in the Gospel sense they had a perfect faith—answering effectively all the practical purposes of faith.

We have had long standing opportunities of learning the spiritual nature of Christ’s mission and kingdom, and that, though believers forfeit no rights in becoming disciples of Christ, yet they can claim no peculiar temporal privileges because of their glorious relation to Jesus ; but from the very antagonism of their spiritual life to the carnal world, and for purposes of discipline, they must suffer tribulation ; still the faith of a

large proportion of believers in relation to this very matter is, I fear, very defective. They don't exactly understand why it is that, though the called of God "according to his purpose," they should suffer these things, and cannot fully appreciate the fact that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

This lack in their faith manifests itself in a variety of ways, one or two of which I will mention for illustration. I once heard a pious lady complaining of the temptations of Satan. She thought if the wicked one was chained, or banished from the world altogether, going to heaven would be easy work; and how to reconcile his diabolical presence and agency with the wisdom and effectiveness of God's special providence, was a difficulty she could not solve.

I have often heard poor doubting souls say, too, in regard to the opposition of bad men and women, "O I could bear anything from God. I would be willing to die for Jesus; but God has nothing to do with the mean conduct of my neighbours, and I can't stand it."

I heard a woman in Melbourne, who maintained a respectable social position, and a profession of religion for years, complaining of the bad treat-

ment she had received from a certain person, of whom she expected better things; and her feelings of indignation became so intensified, that she said, “I believe that portion of our Lord’s prayer, ‘Forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive them that trespass against us,’ ought to be amended, for it is utterly impossible for anybody to bear meekly what I have to bear; and to forgive such a wretch is out of the question.” I doubt if she had any saving faith at all.

But many who have saving faith, nevertheless have great difficulty in reconciling these things. The principal grounds of their embarrassment are indicated by such questions as these: “Cannot God prevent these temptations of Satan, and these persecutions from men? If so, why permit them? If he cannot prevent them, is not his power and providential government defective? and hence the grounds of our faith defective?” We cannot command time now to go very fully into an elucidation of this subject, but I will try and explain it sufficiently for the practical end of contributing to supply in this relation what is “lacking in your faith.”

In the empire of our moral nature the will has its appropriate orbit, within which all its enact-

ments, constituting our moral character, are passed. This orbit of the will is, by an immutable law of the Creator, impregnable against coercive invasion. It cannot be forcibly entered by men or devils: and God himself cannot force an entrance without violating his own laws in our moral constitution, a thing the immutable God will not do. Men or devils may appeal to the will persuasively, through the understanding, conscience, or emotional sensibilities, but the will is free to choose or refuse. God's mighty Spirit will bring to bear on our intelligence and heart all manner of persuasive motives, drawn from heaven, earth, and hell, appealing to our will, and accompany them by gracious light, and quickening life, but will not coercively invade the sacred precincts of this orbit. To say that God cannot coerce the human will, in its moral enactments and adjustments, is no more than to say that "it is impossible for God to lie," or contradict himself, or violate his own constitutional laws in man's nature. But everything outside of the orbit of the will of each and all the moral subjects of God's government, falls under the immediate administration of his absolute special providence; all the words as well as the overt acts of all men. "There are many devices in a man's heart: nevertheless,

the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." These devices of a man's heart make up every shade and proportion of his moral character, which will constitute the subject matter for adjudication in the judgment, and its eternal issues. But as soon as these devices take form in word or deed, and pass the lines of this orbit, they become the common property of the special providence of God, who will allow them to develop, and pass on to the contemplated end of the responsible deviser, or divert them to other ends, or restrain them in part or in whole, as may best subserve the purposes of his moral government. "The counsel of the Lord will stand," and that, too, without the slightest interference with man's moral freedom, in adjusting himself to God's immutable laws and provisions. If a man deliberately wills to murder me, the very moment his will enacts the murderous intent, God writes him down in his books a murderer; but to execute his murderous purpose, he has to pass through the domain of God's special Providence; and he cannot hurt a hair of my head, unless God give him tether, remove his providential hedge from about me, and deliver me over to the bloody man. That, God will never do, unless he sees that I can thus better subserve the interests of

his cause in the world, and enhance my own happiness by wearing a martyr's crown, or, in other words, till he sees that the cause for my removal from life exists in my moral relations to him, for happiness or misery, according to my works; and hence for some purpose of his wisdom he sees it proper to allow this murderous occasion of death to take effect. If God thus permit him to take away my life, he is none the more a murderer in God's account, than when he first devised it in his heart. If God restrain him, he is none the less a murderer. "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps." These heart devices adjust or disjoint his right relations to God, and involve their legitimate consequences for weal or for woe, "but the Lord directeth his steps"—adjusts the man and his devices to the ends of his moral government. "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to naught; he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." When Joseph was sold by his brethren, they meant it for evil, but God meant it for good, and so overruled it, and no thanks to the wicked speculators in human blood. No contingent

emergency can arise to preclude or defeat the immutable principles and counsels of the divine administration. Hence, in the congratulatory speech of Jethro to his victorious son-in-law, he said, "Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hands of the Egyptians, and out of the hands of Pharoah; who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them."

Hence, also, the song of the Psalmist—"In Juda is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield and the sword, and the battle. Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. The stout-hearted are spoiled; they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep. Thou, even thou, art to be feared, and who may stand in thy sight when thou art angry? Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared and was still, when God arose to judgment, to save all the

meek of the earth. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

God's special providence, we may perceive, therefore, lays under contribution every force in the universe outside the orbit of the will of all his moral subjects, permitting or restraining them as may best subserve the ends of his government, without the least coercive influence on their moral freedom.

But why not restrain the manifestation of sin altogether?

That would make a false showing of human nature, and tend to promote a carnal sleep, and self-righteous deception, which would to a great extent preclude our appreciation of God's remedy in Christ, and the possibility of our justifying the administration of his righteous government.

But why should the righteous God employ evil agents in the execution of his purposes?

If these evil agents did not exist, a different application of his immutable principles of righteousness would be made, according to the righteousness of his subjects, and good agents only would perhaps be used; but as these evil agents do exist, and as we suffer the evils of their wickedness, it is

a mercy to the world that the righteous God can so use them, without any encroachment on their moral freedom, as to make good come out of their evil devices.

God, therefore, never invades the orbit of the human will, or the orbit of the will of any rational moral subject, but everything outside of that orbit falls under the administration of his absolute special providence. Thus while he has not the least complicity with the iniquity of bad men or devils, or the errors of good men, he has, without the slightest interference with the moral agency of his subjects, perfect control of every force in the universe outside the orbit of the will of his responsible creatures. Hence, when any agency, good or bad, reaches me, it is an expression of God's will concerning me. Something for me to learn, enjoy, do, or suffer.

An aged widow, who was dependent on charity for her bread, could specially appropriate that portion of the Lord's prayer to herself, "Give us this day our daily bread." One day a company of boys, in passing her cabin, heard her praying for her daily supply, and thought they would have a little fun at the expense of the good old woman's faith. So they ran off to the baker's

and bought a few loaves, and threw them into her cabin. The old saint saw the bread tumbling about her, and broke out in an exclamation of praise to God.

The boys came in and said, "Well, old woman, what are you praising the Lord for?"

"Oh! I am praising him for the bread he sent me, in answer to my prayer!"

"What a poor superstitious old woman you are. The Lord did not send you the bread. We bought it of the baker, and threw it in ourselves. The Lord had nothing to do with it."

"Ah, my dear boys, you don't understand it. The Lord sent me the bread in answer to my prayer, no matter if the devil brought it." Just so of every good gift we receive. So also with all the temptations of Satan, and all the various opposing forces of men. Not one of them can touch me, or you, or any believer, without passing through the domain of God's absolute special providence; and the fact that he allows them a passage to me, is an expression of his will concerning me. Something for the development of my mind, to increase my knowledge of men or devils; to try and thus improve the effectiveness of my faith; to exercise, and thus improve essential Christian graces, meek-

ness, patience, humility, forbearance, brotherly kindness, sympathy with those of like trials, and hope. All these "things work together for good to them that love God." We must be sure to establish and maintain our right moral relation to God, and carefully guarding that gap, we have nothing to fear. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass"—bring that to pass which is best for us. However profound the mystery, or deep the darkness involved in the disciplinary ordeal, "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day." It is quite within the power of my will to defeat God's gracious purposes concerning me, but no other force in heaven, earth, or hell can. The denial of this fact is an admission that men or devils may thwart God's purpose concerning me, and hence that I have no reliable basis of faith in God's providence. But the fact is clearly revealed, in connection with this very subject, that "nothing can separate us from the love of God," nor hence frustrate his designs in regard to such. Hence St. Paul's triumphant conclusions from an elaborate argument on the subject: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or dis-

gress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword?"—O dear, says the doubting soul, can it be God's will that his children are subject to all these things, embracing the worst agencies and designs that can be imagined? Yea, replies St. Paul, "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature." This enumeration embraces every imaginable thing that can possibly oppose us, in all time present and to come, in all space from the utmost height to the deepest "depth;" in all states of "life or death," of all varieties, angelic or human, singly or organized; and if by possibility, in this world or any other world, we may encounter any hideous nondescript call it that "any other creature" which added to all the deadly train before enumerated, singly or combined, shall not "be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." We have nothing to do, but to attend to our own business, maintain by faith our right relation to God, as his loyal, loving subjects

and children, and we are bound to come out all right.

“Keep thy heart with all diligence,”—my dear christian reader—“for out of it are the issues of life.” “Be thou faithful unto death and thou shalt obtain a crown of life,” in spite of all the opposing powers of men or devils.

Let us then have done with heart complainings about God’s providential arrangements, which are for purposes of discipline and development in the things essential to our happiness and usefulness in this world, and our preparation for the crown of glory in waiting. For it should be remembered that those complaints about the existence and deceivable workings of Satan in the world, and our suffering from bad men and women, are, in fact, murmurings against God for permitting these forces to oppose us; for without a doubt God could eject all the legions of devils from this globe at a word, and not one of them can even enter a swine without his permission.

He could just as easily, without the least interference with man’s moral agency in its appropriate sphere—the orbit of the will in the interior empire of our moral nature—restrain and prevent the overt execution of the evil devices of every heart in the world. If such measures would

bring more souls to Jesus, and to heaven, I have not a doubt that God would just do that thing; but he sees that his clearly revealed plan is the best, and, with all due deference to the opinions of his doubting, croaking subjects, pursues the even tenure of his way.

What, then! are we to enter into sympathy with the nature or designs of these evil agencies, diabolic and human, that God is thus pleased to lay under contribution in his disciplinary arrangements for the trial of our faith?

Nay, we must abhor that which is evil, as God himself does.

Why doth God employ evil agents in carrying out the purposes of his providential government?

Because his providential government is adjusted to the conditions of a world full of such agents. The evil devices of their hearts are independent of his will, and directly opposed to it; and they thus defeat his purpose of mercy in regard to them. To restrain and prevent, entirely, the outward manifestation of their heart iniquity would make a false showing of human nature, and hence blind the world to the facts of its own deep depravity, and hence to the necessity of an atonement, and God's provision of mercy in Christ, and preclude

the possibility of our being able to appreciate or justify God's administration of justice, Yet these bad passions of mankind are thus permitted to manifest themselves in but a small degree compared with their real heart corruptions.

The rumseller, for example, who forecloses a mortgage on the farm of his victimized neighbour in payment for the bar bills that ruined him, and cast the mildew of hell on his poor family, would thus grasp the title to a hundred farms if he could.

The filthy debauchee who seduced the young lady—who, in a fit of despair to cover her shame, dashed herself into eternity over the Newcastle Cliffs, N. S. Wales, a hundred feet in height, would thus seduce fifty unsuspecting young ladies if he had the opportunity. The same is true, to a greater or less extent, of all classes of sinners; so that what God doth "restrain," exceeds, perhaps, a thousand fold what he permits and "makes to praise him," by such a manifestation of the real facts, as they exist in the hearts of sinners, as will clearly reveal to mankind their deep depravity; and hence their utter unfitness for heaven without "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Moreover, since mankind generally, and be-

lievers in Christ particularly, because of the carnal enmity of sinners against their master, must suffer from their necessary relation to these evil agencies, it is a great mercy, and a commendation of the wise administration of God's government, that we have compensative advantages in the gracious disciplinary benefits, God is pleased to work out of all these for good to them that love him. I believe also that God doth the best thing possible for all classes of rebels against him until they destroy themselves, and perish by their persistent resistance of the Holy Ghost. These remarks refer specially to the evil agencies of bad human beings, which God restrains or permits as may best serve the ends of his moral government over the world.

The probable reasons for allowing Satan to come into this world and remain, I have explained in *Reconciliation, or How to be Saved*, Chapter III. The smallest degree of faith necessary to prepare us for heaven will give us the victory over all the devils that the Lord will allow to tempt us. He works only in the children of disobedience, and it is because they are children of disobedience that they are delivered over to the tyranny of Satan, but for which, they would sink down in carnal sleep and self-deceptive security, and it would probably be

much more difficult to bring them to Christ than it is now in the present relation of things.

Well then, if the access of bad men or devils to us is an expression of God's will in regard to us, are we tamely to submit and allow them to have their own way in outraging our rights, and the laws of God? Their wicked nature and devices are in direct opposition to God's will. It is the permitted access of these evil forces to us, that manifests God's will as to the disciplinary end of the struggle that must ensue. We must accept the conflict as under the appointment of God's wise providence, and adjust ourselves to it with the wisdom and faith becoming rational subjects of God's government, and soldiers of Christ. Turn a deaf ear to it, flee from it, cry for, and confidently expect deliverance, face it, defy it, defend the right, just according to the nature of the case. With commanding faith in God's providence we should "in patience possess our souls," and standing in the right, maintain first the glory of God, in the best ends of his spiritual kingdom, and then, subordinately, our own God given rights.

Again these "all things" which God, in his wisdom and love, hath working for us, to our real advantage, embrace not only all the agents in this

world, essentially evil in themselves, with their evil purposes, but the errors, and inadvertencies of good men and women, and our own errors as well.

As before remarked, our moral harmony with God does not preclude our liability to mistakes of judgment, nor hence mistakes in theory and practice. These mistakes must violate physical laws in some of their varieties, and such violation will lay us liable to their legitimate penalties. If we presumptuously throw ourselves down from “the pinnacle of the temple,” it is a sin which throws the sinning soul out of its spiritual orbit—its right moral relation to God—and he must expect to lose both soul and body. If he fall over by mistake, his sad mistake does not disturb his moral relation, but this blessed moral relation does not exempt him from the legitimate penalty of his fall, by which his neck is broken. To be sure, the moral laws of God’s government, as before explained, are of a higher order than his physical laws, and hence, in any case in which they may come into conflict with each other, the moral laws predominate, and the natural, in so far, are suspended. Thus among the signs and wonders divinely attesting the mission and the message of the men whom God employed to communicate

his Gospel, the Saviour said, "They shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up deadly serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them." Every miracle involved a suspension of natural law, or manifested a power superior to it. And so now, though miracles, proper, having a definite end, which was met in perfecting the revelation of the Gospel, are not, therefore, perpetuated, still all physical laws are subordinate to the laws of Christ's spiritual kingdom, under the administration of God the Holy Spirit. The real cause of natural death, for example, is, I believe, in any and all cases in our moral relations to God, and not simply in the occasions, or ostensible causes of death. Every soul in the world is under the immediate care of God the Holy Ghost. The great object of his mission is to lead them to Christ, and save them, if they will consent, and walk after him. He does not, I believe, set his contraband seal on any soul, marking it as "a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction," till by its own acts it has destroyed its spiritual receptivity, and is hence incapable of being saved. Till the soul, under the administration of the Holy Spirit, is thus fitted either for heaven or hell, he guards that soul against the shafts of death. Hence in

the violation of laws that would legitimately involve death, he permits or suspends the death dealing penalty, according to the demands of the moral relationships of that soul. Hence the "miraculous escapes" from death which occur so frequently. Some persons ascribe them to inexorable fatality; some to mere accident; and some to an extraordinary providence.

A friend of mine who carries a large bullet in his body, said to me, "According to the laws of physiology and anatomy, I have no right to be alive." I believe that according to ordinary physical laws, multitudes about us "have no right to be alive." They survive, not by any charm of fatality, nor chance, nor even an extraordinary providence, but by the ordinary providence of God, in relation to his spiritual kingdom. I believe, however, that in regard to persons who erroneously, or otherwise, break physical laws, if they cannot be cured of that, it will cause the Spirit to force up his awakening work, which will rapidly bring the moral issues in their case to a crisis, and natural penalties will be allowed to take their course. When the real cause for death transpires in our moral relations, then any one of the ten thousand occasions of death will suffice to "loose the silver cord," and close our probationary career.

Well, it is a comfort to know that all these mistakes, with their dreadful penalties, are among the "all things that shall work together for good to them that love God." It is not better for us, remember, to fall into mistakes and blunders, and expose ourselves to their penalties; we must, if possible, avoid them. But if we should fall into them, God will incorporate them into his disciplinary arrangement for our good, and turn them to the best account under the circumstances. One end will be to correct the blindness or weakness which occasioned the mistake. Another will be to use the penal consequences of them for general purposes of mental and moral development.

While therefore we should earnestly seek the best light for the correction and avoidance of mistakes, we should not sit down in discouragement and allow unbelief to use those penalties against our faith. When the cause is past, and we have learned from it the best lessons we can, while the effect is pressing us sorely, remember it is now one of God's disciplinary instruments, holding the place of some other kinds of trial, which we would have in the absence of this; and hence we should bear those penal disciplinary trials with as much thankful patience as any others. There are unfathomable mysteries in the doctrine of Divine

providence, but all the practical facts necessary to an intelligent, living, conquering faith, are clearly revealed in the Bible, and in God's manifest system of providence daily administered. I but incidentally glance at the subject here, for the practical purpose of showing the relation of a perfect faith in God to it. Many persons, to be sure, may have a perfect faith exactly answering the ends of faith, in their salvation, whose knowledge on this subject may be very defective, but still it is a matter of great importance that we "increase in the knowledge" as well as "in the love of God." Indeed, the discharge of our daily duties, and the daily application of God's promises, are so intimately associated with the daily providence of God over us, that a knowledge of such practical facts and principles manifested in the administration of God's moral government, as we have had under consideration, greatly assists our faith, and tends to the stability of Christian character. Faith, however, and not knowledge nor any other exercise or attainment, is the simple, grand condition of our salvation from first to last, but it must be exercised in its true relation to obedience, and manifest itself appropriately in all the fruits of holiness.

CHAPTER VI.

PERFECT LOVE.

THE fulfilment of those two conditions—perfect submission to God's will, and perfect faith—brings us, my dear friend, into that sweet union with God thus illustrated by St. John:—"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment." Love is not the result of a direct volition. We do not love any object by simply resolving to love it. We love no object only as it, upon some kind of an acquaintance, commends itself to our affections, on the ground of its own peculiar loveliness, or what it is to us, or both. So this union with God, illustrated by the terms, "dwelling in him, and he in us," secures to us such an acquaintance with him, revealing so much loveliness, both in himself, and in what he is

to us, that we cannot but love him. "Herein is our love made perfect." Love is a spontaneity under certain favourable conditions. Supreme love to God spontaneously arises from this perfect union with him.

Many persons spend much of their time in trying directly to love God with all their hearts by some kind of a sentimental process, and sing,

"'Tis worse than death my God to love,
And not my God alone."

But they cannot work up the genuine thing, which will enable us "to stand," and, "give us boldness in the day of judgment." There is but one way to get that, which is by that perfect "faith which works by love, and purifies the heart," and brings us into fellowship with the Holy Sanctifier, "dwelling in God, and he in us." Two cannot thus dwell together except they be agreed. God must submit to our will, or we to his; and as our will is so likely to be wrong, and very capricious at best, till it is brought fully to blend with the will of God; and as his will is perfectly right, always right, and perfectly consistent with our best interests, in time and in eternity, it becomes our imperative duty to submit perfectly and continuously to God's

will, and submitting, accept in perfect confidence his adequate provision in Christ for our salvation.

The reasonableness of such principles and facts must commend itself to any sensible sinner, to say nothing of spiritual enlightenment.

To say that in such a relation, "our will is lost in the will of God," is an exaggeration of the fact. God does not ignore nor suspend by this work of heart purity and perfect love, any faculty of our minds, or function of our moral constitution; but there is a perfect acquiescence and cheerful blending of our will with the will of God, which becomes the rule of our hearts; and conformity to his will becomes our supreme pleasure.

Many persons, however, contend that such an attainment is impossible in this life. If so, then St. John, and the rest of the apostolic writers, nay, the Holy Spirit, who spake through them, must have laboured under a great mistake in regard to this important subject. Such persons would not like to accept such a conclusion, yet it is the legitimate conclusion from their premises.

The fact is, instead of being unreasonable or impracticable, it is simple, reasonable, and beautifully appropriate. God required that much of the old Hebrews four thousand years ago, and certainly

could not ask less of us, under the full manifestation of the Gospel. Why, every man expects that of his wife, and the wife of the husband, in the subordinate sense appropriate to their matrimonial relationship.

If, my brother, your wife should say to you, "My dear husband, I love you, you know I do; but there is a man across the street whom I love as much as I love you; I don't know but a little more"—that would be death to you. You can bear very well with defects in her memory, or with bodily defects. However great your regret that such defects exist, they don't touch the sacred bond which makes you "twain one flesh." But a defect in fidelity, confidence, and love, is an outrage upon your marriage union.

This very figure is employed repeatedly by the Holy Spirit, both in the Old and New Testament Scriptures, to illustrate this very subject. The relevant points in the figure to which we must confine ourselves in its use, are the perfect confidence, fidelity, and love essential to such a union.

The Prophet Ezekiel fully elaborates this figure, and brings out clearly the degradation from which God hath exalted us to this glorious union with

himself. The figure was then applied to the Jewish church; the body of true believers is denominated the Bride of the lamb, and Christ is the bridegroom. The relation of the church collectively to Christ is but the aggregation of her individual relationships; hence the figure applies appropriately to each individual, comprising aggregately the body of believers.

God said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abomination, and say, 'Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem! thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother was a Hittite; and as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee to do any of these things unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out into the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live!'" Then he goes on to describe how he brought her up, adorned her, made her his bride, and set her up a queen among the nations. Should she not

have been true to him? Should she not have maintained perfect fidelity to him, perfect confidence in him, and perfect love for him?

That is a good illustration of the deep degradation and utter destitution from which God has exalted every sinner who has now the honour to dwell with God in the bonds of a spiritual union, more sacred, more endearing, and more enduring, than the matrimonial relation can possibly be.

You well remember, my friend, when God found you in the old field of carnal nature "in your sins and in your blood." It was my privilege, a few years ago, to visit the spot where over twenty-five years ago God found me in my sins, and saved me from death. I defined the spot as nearly as I could, and kneeled down there, and thanked God. Then, recalling in detail the occasion I was commemorating, —the hardness, the darkness, the coldness of spiritual death, the repellent forces of carnality, stimulated and plied by satanic agency, my despair and misery, my surrender to God, and my acceptance of Christ, my deliverance from the power of darkness, and translation into the kingdom of Jesus—and recounting an experience of, then, nearly twenty years in the blessed relation with God, to which I had been admitted, with a heart overflowing with

humble, grateful emotion, and perfect love, I praised God again. Before I rose from my knees I sang Dr. William Hunter's hymn, appropriate to such an occasion :—

Sinking and panting as for breath,
I knew not help was near me,
And cried, O save me, Lord, from death,
Immortal Jesus, hear me !

Then, quick as thought, I felt him mine,
My Saviour stood before me ;
I saw his brightness round me shine.
And shouted Glory ! glory !

Oh ! sacred hour, oh ! hallowed spot,
Where love divine first found me,
Wherever falls my distant lot,
My heart shall linger round thee !

And when from earth I rise to soar
Up to my home in heaven,
Down will I cast my eyes once more,
Where first I was forgiven.

You remember that time in your experience, my brother, and you remember it, my sister in Jesus ; and the loved ones that wept over you, prayed for you, and rejoiced with you ! Some of them have crossed the dark river, and have gone up to their home in heaven. Others are still, though far away

from you, it may be, battling away in Zion's war; But oh! the compassionate God that saved you, and took you into such a glorious union with himself!—should we not be true to him, should we not maintain confidence in him, and love him supremely? The prophet in further elaboration of this figure represents Jerusalem, the bride of God, as proving utterly false to him, “as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband,” and the result is thus expressed in God's own words, “And I will judge thee as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy.”

Have we all, spiritually, been true to God? I am afraid we are not half so careful to maintain our right relation to God, as we should be. There are multitudes of those professing to be in this blessed union, as the bride of the lamb, who though in their marriage relationship would not bear the slightest insinuation reflecting on their fidelity and love, seem to think but little of confessing their want of faith and love in their spiritual Bridegroom.

I was leading a class in the town of Yass, N.S.W., a few months since, and a sister, in telling her experience, said, “I am thankful for as much of

the love of God as I enjoy in my heart, but I do not love God as I once did.”

I replied, “ What a pity ! Sister, if you should say that of your husband, it would nearly kill him.” My friend, our practical standard on this subject is, I fear, quite too low. We should at least be as careful to honour our glorious relationship to the heavenly bridegroom as we are to honour our matrimonial relationships. This very significant illustration, employed by God himself, teaches us the indispensable necessity of maintaining honourably the fidelity, confidence, and love appropriate to such a union with him.

It would indicate a dreadful state of morals if connubial infidelity should become so common that the very fact of a man and his wife professing to be true to each other, would expose them to ridicule and reproach, on the ground that such a thing is impossible. But are there not very many professing Christians who scorn the idea of perfect love to God, and say all manner of ridiculous things of the man or woman who dares to claim such as their privilege and duty, and profess to experience and maintain the fact ?

Upon a review of this subject, my dear reader, you may readily perceive that Christian perfection

is not that misty, incomprehensible, unattainable something that Satan and poor dwarfish doubters would have us believe, but a simple, appropriate, necessary, practicable attainment. Not for a certain "caste" or small class only, but the privilege of all believers. Not a matter left to their own option, but an imperative duty which they cannot ignore, when brought home to their conscience by the Holy Spirit; nor neglect without a forfeiture of their justified relation.

Though simple, it is thoroughly effective. Perfect loyalty to God, to the death. Can any thing be more appropriate, or effective?

Faith, that apprehends the spiritual woes and wants of my soul; that apprehends in Christ a perfect remedy, and supply, and, under the leading of God the Spirit, sent into the world for this purpose, makes now and continuously an appropriation of that remedy and that supply to my needy case. A faith that obtains those practical ends is, to say the least of it, a perfect faith. We apply the term perfect to any thing which exactly meets the end for which it was designed.

Perfect love, as just shown, is so simple, and essential, to an honourable maintenance of our right relations to God and society, that the wonder

is that any man or woman at all enlightened by the Spirit, should think, for one moment, of stopping short of it.

A legitimate fruit, and concomitant of perfect love to God, is love to our neighbour as to ourselves ; for perfect love to God does not preclude every other kind of love, but simply whatever is opposed to it ; and it necessarily includes just that measure of love we owe to every object having a legitimate claim upon our affections.

It embraces self love up to the measure of our God-giving rights, and that is the standard of my love to my neighbour. My love for him and his rights must prompt me cheerfully to extend to him all those rights which I claim, under God's general charter of human rights. This standard of simple justice defines the principles of the second table of the moral law.

The principle of what may be called the "eleventh commandment," that Jesus gave unto his disciples, embodies that superior gospel principle of a voluntary sacrifice of personal rights, when we can thereby better subserve the cause of Christ. This spirit of self-sacrifice, which was so perfectly exemplified in Christ, and all "for the joy that was set before him" of saving poor sinners, the very

work to which in our appropriate sphere we are called, is “the mind of Christ,” which we are to “let be in” us, through the power of his loving Spirit.

Some doubting souls cry “oh ! it is impossible.” But the fact is, for common-sense appropriateness, and beautiful simplicity, it is just in keeping with the simple doctrine of holiness in our relations to God, which we have described.

This love is a thing of the heart. Its outward manifestation is circumscribed and limited by laws and forces over which we have no control. I can say, without any egotism at all, but for the praise of God’s loving Spirit, that I love every man, woman, and child in the world, enough—even the lowest and most degraded heathen in it—to go down, at the hazard of limb or life, and grasp in the embrace of Christian sympathy the last guilty rebel, and bring all up to the platform of equality with myself. I would give them my blessings, minus my infirmities. But while that is the language of the heart, the simple fact is, I cannot do all that, indeed but a small degree of it. Thus a heart principle of love, wide as the world, is by uncontrollable forces narrowed down in its manifestation to the limited capacity of one man

A man might say to me, “ ‘ Love thy neighbour as thyself.’ I am thy neighbour, and therefore claim half of all thy goods.”

But he must remember that God commands me to provide first for my own household, and pronounces me worse than an infidel if I do not. He must remember, too, that he is but one of a thousand persons, it may be, who have as valid a claim upon my charities as he, and to allow him to infringe upon their claims would be wrong.

It is said that a begger once addressed Lord Wellington as his brother, and begged the brave man to pity and help his poor brother.

“ On what ground do you presume to call me your brother,” inquired the noble lord.

“ We are all children of the same original parents, and are therefore brethren, and should all feel brotherly sympathy for each other.”

“ Very well,” replied the old chief, “ here is a penny; and if all your brothers will give you as much, you will be a richer man than I am.”

The greater the number of claims upon our charity, the smaller must be the amount to each case. These may suffice to illustrate the providential conditions which must limit the application of universal love. The believer’s heart-love for his

neighbour would relieve every needy person in the world, while, in fact, he can only "lay by in store according as the Lord hath prospered him," and disburse his consecrated funds as his best judgment may indicate as suitable.

As it regards the manifestation of love to the souls of mankind, it should prompt us to study prayerfully the best modes of winning souls to Christ, and of building them up in their holy faith, and lead us to use our available time and best abilities, to those ends, up to the lines of our capacity, without an infringement of physical laws, which would impair our working efficiency. We cannot define the lines of our duty by the amount of work to be done—that is immense, immeasurable. Unless in great emergencies, when it may become us to lay down our "lives for the brethren," it is not our duty to violate physical laws, even in the prosecution of a good work, for we thereby involve penalties which interfere with our future labours, and greatly lessen the aggregate of that measure of usefulness which by a judicious employment of our powers, in accordance with the demands of physical laws is attainable.

I have learned some useful lessons to myself on this subject in the school of experience. Formerly

I allowed my "love for my neighbour," and my zeal for the salvation of souls, to carry me beyond the safe lines of physical laws, and hence involved consequences by which I lost more than I had gained by the extra exertion. By close attention to the subject, and oft-repeated experiments, I learned the measure of my power to do, or to endure. For years I have lived on the outer verge of the sphere of my capacity. An inner line would be damaging to my spiritual life; an outer line would be damaging to my physical life; either is wrong, and should be avoided. By attention to these laws, through the mercy of God, I have been able to work effectively every week for many years. It was thus, I doubt not, that Mr. Wesley was enabled to work effectively "till he ceased at once to work and live."

To love our neighbour as ourselves, so far therefore, from being an impracticable thing, is simple and appropriate—a spontaneous fruit of the love of Christ in our hearts. Many good men, under the misguided impulses of this love, have greatly injured themselves in doing good to others, often even unto death.

There may, indeed, be zeal unto death without a full development of love.

Love to God and our neighbour, which is but a legitimate fruit of faith, should be as the steam power in Christian enterprise; but it should be judiciously employed, as steam power must be, to avoid disaster, and secure its great practical ends.

I believe Christian perfection to be the simplest possible style of practical godliness. Anything short of it is complicated and difficult.

If, for example, I should become involved in an error of judgment, as we are all liable to be, while we live in the body, if the error relate to my duty to God, directly, when convinced, I can go to him with a good conscience and say, "O my gracious God, thou knowest that I am a poor, short-sighted, erring creature, but thou knowest that in my heart I did what I thought was the best. 'Thou knowest my frame, thou rememberest that I am dust;' but thou knowest that I am thine, wholly thine, and that I love thee with all my heart." If my error relate to my duty to my neighbour, I have only to see it, and I go to him and say, "My brother, I am sorry to have to inform you that through a well-meaning mistake of mine, I have done you an injury. I see it now, but did not at that time. I did what I thought was for the best, but missed my mark, as I have often done before; but I have

come to explain the matter to you, and make reparation.” My error has not affected either table of the law—love to God, or love to my neighbour—nor hence has it involved my conscience in guilt, because the heart was pure. But if the motive fountain of the heart is poisoned with the intermingling bitter waters of sin, and I am involved in the same error, alike unavoidable, and I fall back upon my motives for comfort, alas! as the prophet Amos says, it is “As if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him, or went into his house and leaned his hand on the wall and a serpent bit him.” The homely modern expression is, “jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire.”

If, on the other hand, when I see in the distance what I conceive to be an onerous duty—a formidable task. If the principle of obedience in my heart is not perfect, I begin to question, “O I wonder if I can do that? I am afraid I cannot. Poor human nature; that is too much for me to hope to accomplish.” I thus question, and quibble, and shrink, and involve my conscience in the guilt of disobedience. Upon a nearer approach to the anticipated duty, I find I was altogether mistaken. It is not my duty at all. Am I clear? Nay, verily I am guilty, where there was not the least occasion.

But if the principle of obedience in my heart is perfected, and I have but one question to settle, and that the simple question, “What is my duty?” and I see in the distance the same conceivable duty precisely, as in the other case, I say to myself, “That is a formidable looking task, but if it is a duty, it is right; if a duty, it is practicable; if a duty, the Holy Spirit will lead me to it, and through it. I cannot yet see how I am to do it, but if it is a duty, by the exercise of my best judgment, he will show me how to do it. Lord, here am I, use me as thou wilt. I am ignorant, but ‘thou art my light, and my salvation.’ I am weak, but thou art my strength.” I thus meet the thing simply, fairly, honestly, but find on a near approach that I was quite mistaken. It is not my duty at all. Am I involved as in the other case? Nay, verily, I have received a blessing in the mental act of obedience, though now, I of course, do not outwardly fulfil it, because there is no occasion.

If the Lord command me to remove a mountain from its granite moorings, into the depths of the sea, I am not responsible for the removal of the mountain, but I am responsible for the wisest, promptest act of obedience within my power. I

have to put in the lever of faith, at the most available point, rest it on the fulcrum of God's command and promise, and heave away. If God command it, though I am only responsible for duty, and not results, the mountain "will be removed, and be cast into the depths of the sea." Satan tells poor doubting souls that the commands of God are grievous; but St. John, by the Holy Spirit, tells us "the commandments of God are not grievous." No matter what may be the apparent difficulties involved in the duty itself; or what may be the natural timidity, or other disabilities in ourselves, God, who knoweth us perfectly, will not require what is out of proportion with our abilities under the enlightening, quickening power of his Holy Spirit. We should at once, and for ever, settle that as a fact, and it will be a grand support to the heart principle of obedience.

CHAPTER VII.

QUERIES AND OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

“WELL,” says one, “I was made perfect in loyalty, faith, and love to God, when I was first converted to him.”

Are you quite sure of that, my friend ?

When stationed in Baltimore city, in the early part of my ministry, a venerable steward of the society in my charge said to me, “Brother Taylor, I don’t believe in this doctrine of entire sanctification as a specific attainment subsequent to conversion. When God converted my soul, he did it well, and I then received all the sanctification I ever expect to get, except a gradual growing in grace.”

I was then a very unobtrusive, timid young man, and would not have had confidence sufficient to have advanced any opinion in this venerable man’s presence adverse to his mind, except in a

clear case of duty. The good Spirit, perfectly knowing my embarrassment, at once gave me "a mouth and wisdom" which he was "not able to gainsay nor resist."

"Brother T——," said I, "Mr. Wesley admits the possibility of a person being justified freely and sanctified wholly in the same moment of time. In all his extensive acquaintance he had never met with such a case, but as a theory, thought it possible. Now, probably I have the pleasure of meeting in you, my brother, one of those rare cases that Mr. Wesley never knew; and if you were, indeed, "sanctified wholly" in the moment of your conversion to God, and you have been preserved blameless in that state, thank the Lord, you are all right. But if, after thirty years of such gradual growing as you talk about, you are not sanctified wholly now, then you are not right, in so far as you fall short of that experience. It reduces itself to a simple question of fact—are you wholly sanctified to God, or are you not? I will have no discussion with you as to the time—the earlier the better. If in the same moment of your conversion as you say, better still."

I did not press the question, but he at once began to confess his unfaithfulness, and was sorry

to say that he did not enjoy the experience of "entire sanctification."

If pardon and entire sanctification are identical, they are inseparable. Every believer has the whole thing or nothing; whereas the fact is, the mass of believers first receive the grace of pardon and regeneration, and from that basis build up and "go on to perfection."

The doctrine of the inseparable identity of these facts would have been death to me at any time during the first four years of my Christian experience. I knew I was not perfect in love, though I was "groaning after it," and comforted myself with Mr. Wesley's Bible doctrine of the consecutive order of "pardon, holiness, and heaven." I said to myself, "Though I have not attained the second stage, I have the first, and will press on." The error just described would logically have torn up the foundation of my experience, and ruined me.

"When God converts a soul he does it well," as brother T—— affirmed; but then the question is, was entire holiness an object embraced directly in the justifying faith of that soul, and was it God's design in that moment to create him a man in Christ Jesus, instead of a babe in Christ?

Every pardoned sinner is, to be sure, in a certain sense, sanctified to God, but not in the full Gospel sense, embraced in St. Paul's earnest prayer for his believers in Thessalonica. To become a babe is an essential condition to manhood, and not a thing to be despised or underrated by any means. Regeneration is not a development of spiritual life. Regeneration and the new birth comprise the infancy of a perfect man in Christ. You may talk about a perfect babe, if you like, but do not call a perfect babe a perfect man. The submission of a soul to God necessary to a reception and maintenance of justification and regeneration, must be sincere and without reserve; but in that grace, under the tuition of the Holy Spirit, they receive increasing light, proportionate to which, their principle of obedience must be adjusted and developed, and thus “ go on to perfection.”

Is it a gradual or instantaneous work ?

It is both ; as Mr. Wesley remarks :—“ A man may be some time in dying, but there is a moment in which he dies ;” so with the man of sin in the heart.

We do not grow by the involuntary force of a law of growth, like an apple tree, or like a natural babe. It is a law of spiritual growth, through the

power of the indwelling Spirit of God, conditioned on our faith.

It does not either, as in natural growth, necessarily require a very long period of time. Many passages of Scripture, illustrating this law of growth in grace, applicable to any stage of it, before or after perfect love, might be supposed to convey that idea; but there are as many, or more passages which indicate the purification of the heart, as an instantaneous work.

All such, for example, as are taken from the purifications and washings of the Jewish ceremonial; from circumcision; and from the purification of metals. A single specimen or two from each class may suffice. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart will I give unto you, and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

St. Paul, on the faith of God's purpose and provision for this work, of which he had just been writing, thus exhorts his believers in Corinth:—"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved,

let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

God said to his ancient people four thousand years ago, "I will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayst live." Surely he will not do less for us under the Gospel.

This work of purification was advertised as one great object of the mission of Christ four hundred years before his coming.—"Behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts, but who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi." It must begin with God's ministers to be generally effective among his people, "and purge them as gold and silver." Now all such Scriptures indicate a work requiring but a few minutes or hours at most, after the preliminaries are settled.

And such must be so, if there is any hope in the death of those who have but a few days or minutes to live after they obtain pardon.

There is a singular inconsistency in the theories of those persons who suppose we must be growing

in grace many years before we can attain to that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord," when they fully believe that a dying penitent may obtain forgiveness and meetness for heaven. The fact is, if those very parties who have the witness of pardon, but are befogged with their doubting theorie in regard to purity, were summoned to die in an hour, they would drop the discussion, and go at it in earnest, and get it. Well, that is just the thing they ought to do, to prepare them to live.

This thing of seeking holiness that we may simply escape perdition, and be prepared to die, is a motive too selfish and low for any honourable Christian heart. Holiness is what we need to prepare us to live right.

"But," says a doubting soul, "I would seek it at once, but I am afraid, amid the complications of business and family cares, I could not keep it."

Why, my friend, it is just what you need to keep you. And I know of no way to get through your complicated duties and cares comfortably and safely, but by getting your heart purified, and put yourself fully under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

"But," says another, "it cannot be obtained till we come to die."

Well, that may be your opinion, but the teachings of God are just the opposite of that. St. Paul says to the Colossians: “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” They could not stand in a position to which they had not attained. St. Paul prays that the Thessalonian believers may not only be sanctified wholly, but preserved “blameless” in that state; and in his prayer for all Hebrew believers, he says, “Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work,”—not to prepare them to die simply, but “to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.”

The very nature of the work shows its adaptation to this life. The idea of a soldier never becoming loyal till he is dying; or of a wife remaining infidel to her husband, till she is closing her eyes in death, and then to be sure she wakes up to an appreciation of her life duties, when it is too late to fulfil them. The idea that we can’t be

holy till we come to die is ridiculous. It is a great mercy that we may obtain it then, but to postpone such a work, of choice, is to forfeit your justified relation, and expose your soul to the death-penalty of the law for disobedience.

Another inquires can we continue to grow in grace after we are made perfect in love?

Why not? Mind is improvable in its very nature, especially in a spiritual sense. Under suitable conditions it is continually expanding, and is expansible beyond any definable limits. The heart may be full of love to-day, but will expand and contain more to-morrow. If I could use "the word of righteousness" with some "skill" before the heart was purged of unbelief and dead works, can I not acquire skill with greater facility now?

I was being driven in a carriage through the suburbs of Dublin by a friend, and called his attention to a potato patch, half potatoes and half weeds. It was hard to tell which would gain the victory in the end. It was clear there could not be more than half a crop of potatoes, for about half the strength of the soil was wasted on the weeds. I remarked to him that I feared it was a type of too many dwarfish Christians.

We next came to a potato-patch, in which there

was not a weed to be seen. The same kind of soil and seasons as the other, but the product of the latter was more than double that of the field polluted with noxious weeds. When “soul and body” are sanctified wholly, and all the moral forces of the whole man are available to the Holy Spirit’s use surely there must be the fruits of holiness up to the measure of his undivided capacity, and increasing ever, in proportion to the development of that capacity. There can be no limit to Christian attainment in this life if we maintain our right relation to God, and I do not presume that there will be any limit to the development of glorified souls in heaven. Their progress, I believe, will be onward for ever; eternally approximating the perfections of God, in whose image we were made. Christian perfection, instead of fixing a limit to Christian attainment, is the grand preliminary basis for a rapid, felicitous growing up into Christ that will certainly go on to the close of our mortal struggle, and will probably be as illimitable as eternity. St. Paul, speaking of the gifts of Christ to his church, says, “He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers”—to what ends? “For the perfecting of the Saints”—they

were saints, but needed perfecting; and the minister should be thoroughly furnished for this department of his calling—"for the work of the ministry"—the ministry of reconciliation to sinners—"for the edifying of the body of Christ"—building up the church collectively—"Till we all come"—not a few distinguished persons only—"in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children"—as all believers have been—"tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine"—as many have been—"by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love"—having now attained to this standard of perfection—"may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Thus we see that the complete adjustment of our relations to Christ, embraced in the work of Christian perfection, is essential to this growing "up into him in all things," and "to the effectual

working, which maketh increase of the body” of individual believers, and in the same proportion the increase of the body of the church, aggregating these individual members. This growing and increase are hence, subsequent to the attainment of the “ stature of a perfect man ” in Christ.

I have heard some persons try to explain away such plain teaching on this subject by merging the individuality of believers into an ideal body, and say that it was the general improvement and perfecting of this organization that was meant by perfection. But there can be no improvement or perfection of the church collectively, only by the perfection of its individual members. Salvation from first to last is a personal thing.

“ But,” says another, “ why is it that so few profess to attain to this experience of perfect love? ”

First, because the thing itself has been sadly mystified by the traditions of men, and by vague impracticable definitions of it.

Second, because of the paralyzing effect of such numbers of dwarfs, many of them having great influence and much zeal for God, but not according to knowledge in this matter.

Third, many professing it have not honoured their profession. Either they were mistaken, and

hence remained in fact as they were before, or becoming unwatchful, they have relapsed into a sickly, dwarfish state.

Some who enter into this experience, finding so much opposition from members of the church, yield to a censorious spirit, and go into a zealous polemical struggle in defence of their position ; which would be all right if conducted in the spirit of meekness, and that “charity which believeth all things”—admits all the evidence for a favourable construction of the case ; “hopeth all things”—admits all the extenuating facts ; “endureth all things”—patiently endures what it cannot remedy. But sometimes in their zeal they run up into a dogmatical one idea, and like a seed turnip, go all to top, and dry up at the roots, and become almost as bitter and intolerant as an inquisitor of the olden time.

In reply to these facts, I remark, *first*, it is not to man we have to answer, but to God. Though every man be false, God is true, and his purpose and provisions, as revealed in the Gospel, would remain the same, if there was not a living believer in the world.

Second, the fact that some professing perfect love, and from whatever cause, fail to honour their profession, is no reason why we should disobey God,

and neglect to seek what he hath so clearly revealed as the privilege and duty of all.

The same objection lies against justification, and also against all good institutions among men; many dishonour the marriage relation, but that is not admitted as a reason why honest persons may not enter that sacred relationship.

Third, many good people, no doubt, have had their minds so confused about the meaning and use of Gospel terms relating to this experience, that they have been afraid to appropriate them, but have, nevertheless, obtained heart purity, and do exemplify the essential characteristics of perfection. It is a pity that the church should lose the weight of their definite distinct testimony, to encourage seekers of holiness, but it is a mercy that she has the benefit of their example of steadfast piety.

Fourth, there are many living witnesses, who can and do intelligently attest the fact, and exemplify in their lives this blessed union with God, and thus demonstrate what is the privilege of every believer. I have met with hundreds of such examples.

But another inquires, "Is it best for persons enjoying perfect love to make a profession of it?"

Why not? "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord." "Ye shall be witnesses unto me," said the

Saviour on Mount Olivet in his last utterance before his ascension, “ both in Jerusalem, in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” This evidently applies to all believers, and through all time, and in every part of the earth, “ till none shall say to another Know ye the Lord? but all shall know him.”

Now a witness must testify to facts as he knows them—“ the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” Whatever he has demonstrated in his experience, that is pertinent to the demands of the occasion, he is bound in truth to tell. To hold back part of his testimony would make a false showing, and he would thus hide his light under a bushel, when those in the house are stumbling for want of it. If his testimony is to a sinner, then that part of his experience appropriate to such a case may be all that he should give; but before the Church, in the fellowship of believers, he should, for the glory of God, and the instruction and encouragement of seekers of purity, declare the facts as they are in his experience.

Such should speak in humble simplicity, avoiding a high-flown exaggerated style of illustration as “ plunging into an ocean of love,” and “ beholding the resplendent glory of the new Jerusalem,”

&c. As far as possible we should give the facts of our experience in a tangible, plain, common sense style, as St. Paul always did when testifying to the facts of his conversion at Damascus.

It is a matter of specific command, not only to "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end," but to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." The profession of our faith, as witnesses for Christ, may often involve a heavy cross, and yet we should take up the cross, if it is a case of duty, and bear it in humility, and doing so, we will prove it to be a privilege instead of a task.

At a lovefeast in Baltimore city, about nineteen years ago, I felt great embarrassment in confessing the facts in my experience. A venerable Bishop related his experience at that meeting, and said in conclusion, "I have long been groaning after the blessing of perfect love to God. I have not yet attained unto it, but I believe it to be the privilege of all believers, and I am determined by the grace of God to press on till I do realize that 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth me from all sin.'" Then came a struggle in my mind, arising from natural bashfulness, fear of apparent egotism, and an invidious contrast with the experience of the vener-

able man whom I loved and delighted to honour, and the subtle reasonings of Satan, such as the following : “ Pretty piece of presumption for a youth like you to stand up before this assembly, and profess to have attained what this venerable bishop, after the struggle of over forty years, says he has not attained.” I never thought it suitable, in gesture or word, to make an ado over an experience which is, in God’s purpose, but the common privilege of all believers, but to take up the cross I felt upon me, on that occasion, required such a struggle that I dreaded the danger I had always tried to guard against, not simply of egotistic display, but of misleading seekers from the common-sense simplicity of the thing, to some intangible, wonderful mystery. I would gladly have been excused, and kept my seat, but I thought that part of the bishop’s experience very damaging to young Christians desiring to leave the principles, and go on unto perfection. While a number of persons, after the bishop, were speaking, I hid my face in my hands, and with prayerful heart-searching, I re-ascertained, and gratefully confessed to God, the facts in my experience, in their consecutive order from the commencement. I said to God in prayer,—“ Whatever may be the experi-

ence of others, high or low, bishops, preachers, or people, these are thy gracious facts in my heart and life ; and as thou dost not light even ‘a candle to be put under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house,’ I have but the simple duty of an humble, grateful confession of those facts as they exist.” I did so, and found the yoke of Christ to be “easy, and his burden light,” and had reason to believe that my humble testimony gave no offence to the bishop, and was made a blessing to some seekers of purity.

It is a favourite device of Satan to try to unsettle the essential facts in our experience. One of his modes is to induce Christian people to continue to pray for the pardon of their sins, and thus tacitly ignore the fact that God hath already forgiven them. When Bartemus received his sight, had he continued to cry, “Lord, that I might receive my sight !” he would have exhibited the most foolish ingratitude, ignoring the great fact which he should thankfully acknowledge. If after you bestow a gift upon a beggar, he should continue to come to your house begging for the very thing that you have given him, you would send him away about his business. If he should come

for a new favour, that might be appropriate enough, and you could reasonably entertain his suit. When Christians pray, “forgive us our sins,” what do they mean?

If they mean the sins that God hath forgiven, and separated from them “as far as the east is from the west,” then the prayer is inappropriate, and damaging to an essential fact in their experience, and to their influence.

If they wish to pray collectively for a promiscuous audience embracing sinners, then let them so frame their prayers as to apply that portion to those who are not forgiven, otherwise an intelligent sinner will say to himself, “That man professes to having obtained the pardon of his sins, and now he is begging that the Lord would forgive him again. It could not have been very well done, to have to be done over so often.”

If they have been sinning again after forgiveness, it is a burning shame to them, and they should promptly repent in dust and ashes. Then they may indeed pray for the forgiveness of their sins, and apply St. John’s comforting assurance—“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us

our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” But to be sinning and repenting every day is outrageous.

But says one, “Why is the petition, forgive us our sins as we forgive them that trespass against us incorporated in the Lord’s Prayer?”

Because that prayer was designed to be used by penitent sinners as well as by believers. When the Saviour uttered it, he certainly did not mean to apply that part of it to himself, for he was “without sin.” So it is only necessary now to apply it where its application is appropriate. But it embraces a standard of Christian meekness—to do for others as we expect God to do for us—by which all true believers will do well, daily, to measure themselves.

So also, when by faith in Jesus we are sanctified wholly—perfected in loyalty, faith, and love to God—why continue praying for what God hath in mercy granted unto us? To pray for an increase of our Christian graces, and a continued right use of them is always appropriate. If we go on praying for pardon, or holiness, when we have the Spirit’s witness to the fact that God hath already granted them unto us, do we not furnish a fulcrum for the deceitful leverage power of Satan, by which

or verged in any case too near the lines of the enemy ; or when battling with petty trials—for the continued abnegation of self seems to require that we be often left to prove our weakness by contests with the weakest, most contemptible little trials of life, obliging us to bring every little thing to God, casting all our cares on Jesus, making him a confidential adviser in a hundred little things that we would not tell to any created being—then all these varieties of disabilities should be matter of specific confession, and prayer for pardon, and grace to help in time of need. We should be as definite in the maintenance of our right relation to God, and our grateful mention of his specific mercies, and in our petitions “by prayer and supplication making known our requests unto God,” as we are in all our relations to society. If, for example, you call upon a business man in his office, he presumes, of course, that you have some business with him ; and you cannot please him better than at once in a clear definite manner to state the facts embraced in the object of your call, nor try his patience more than to generalize for half an hour, and leave him in doubt at last whether or not you have concealed half the object of your call.

For over twenty years my poor soul and body

have been wholly sanctified to God, which is but the reasonable service required of every sinner. I have been subject to the disabilities of ignorance, hence errors of judgment, with their painful consequences; of great and varied temptations from a great variety of sources; of great reverses of fortune, so called; of great family bereavements and privations; of persecutions, and perils by sea and land; but under all these, and in spite of all these, I have been enabled steadily to maintain, every day, during the said period of over twenty years, the essential facts in my experience, daily confessing them to God, and professing them to the world as occasion seemed to require for the glory of God. The facts of my own utter helplessness, the all-sufficiency and availability of a perfect remedy, and of a perfect supply in Christ, meeting every demand of my needy case, and the abiding presence and effectiveness of the Holy Spirit, in the fulfilment of his gracious offices, have from year to year become more and more clearly defined in my consciousness as living verities. I mention facts of my personal experience, as a witness for Jesus, to illustrate the Gospel doctrines I have had under discussion.

Now, my dear friend, for the sake of your safety,

for there is no safety in disobedience; for the sake of your happiness, which must, in the aggregate, be in exact proportion to your harmony with God; and for the sake of your usefulness to your family connections, the Church, and the world, which must be proportionate to your intelligent piety, I would entreat you to "leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ and go on to perfection." And let all who have become perfect in heart loyalty, faith and love, carefully maintain their facts, and "grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ."

Just in so far as the church of Christ, with all her organic strength, and grand institutions and appliances, falls short of God's standard of practical holiness, will her effectiveness in her great work of saving the world, fall short of the standard of God's purpose and gospel provisions for the accomplishment of that grand result. If the gospel provision for the salvation of the world, instituted by Jesus Christ according to the purpose of God, and administered by the personal Holy Ghost "proceeding from the Father" for this purpose, is inadequate, is it not time the church, and the world, should know it? If adequate, it is high time we should find out and remove the grounds

of failure. While an incalculable amount of good has been done in the world, through the gospel, it is a lamentable fact, that, after the struggle of over eighteen hundred years, we have not carried even the sound of Jesus' name to half the population of the globe, and that the large majority of those who have heard the gospel persist in rebellion against God. There must be a screw loose, a wheel off, or some dreadful miscarriage in this greatest of all enterprises. For the honour of God, and the well-being of a perishing world, let there be a thorough investigation of this matter. If every other enterprise in the world should stand still, let this go on till this mighty problem is solved. The high contracting parties in the matter are God and man. If it be found that the present constitution of the gospel is not sufficient, but that Christ must come again, not as Judge, but as a Saviour, to do, by some kind of coercive power, what the moral forces of his first effort have failed to do, then in the name of all that can affect the great heart of God, let all good people pray that he would come at once, before any more of our dear friends go down to hell. But if it be found that his gospel provisions are exactly suited to these great ends, which I firmly believe, and that the ground of

failure lies entirely with man, the party of the second part, and that when Christ shall come again, as he undoubtedly will, it will not be with the humiliating confession that his first great enterprise for saving the world was quite insufficient, and that now he will try another plan, but to vindicate the absolute perfection of all his plans and provisions, and call man to answer for this dreadful miscarriage, which has occasioned the destruction of millions of souls.

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